

Accidentally Forever

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Accidentally Forever

by [03Foxes10](#)

Summary

After not being approved to move to the states, George takes a small two week vacation in the summer to visit his friends. His friends drag him to a party where a reckless decision was made.

Two years later George is alone in his apartment with nothing but the sound of the heater and his sleeping two year old on his chest. He hasn't spoken to his friends since he left the states all those years ago, terrified of what they might say. What they might think.

George knows the text will come, its his decision on what to do about it he needs to think through.

Happy 25th birthday to himself, he thinks.

[Spotify](#)

Basically George has a baby and then eventually goes back to meet Dream and Sapnap again. No not Mpreg.

Notes

There aren't very many warnings for this book. And if there is I say so at the beginning of the chapter <3

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Accident, by definition, means an unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally, typically resulting in damage or injury. George had an accident occur. A majorly extremely stupid accident occurred.

A year ago it had been the three of them. The Dream team in all their glory. George had been tired of not having his Visa approved, so as a last minute choice he booked a two week flight and spent the days in Florida for a short visit.

It was Sapnap and Dream that took him too the party. It was Sapnap and Dream who'd pointed out the pretty blonde girl watching him from afar. It was all them until George decided to sleep with her. It was fun, nothing overly exciting really. Sex was sex and George got off then proceeded to drink with his best friends like nothing had happened. They'd praised him then. Rejoiced then encouraged more drinks.

It wasn't until George was back in England unpacking did he receive the phone call. Honestly, he didn't want anything to do with the... accident. No one would blame him, not even the mother of his unborn child. She'd explained how unfit to be a mother she was in length. Explanation after explanation had gone over into the early am mornings for George. He didn't exactly have a say in what choice she chose, but he tried to be encouraging. Falling apart at the seams he tried to be there for her. The one option she'd finally agreed too was putting the baby up for adoption. George felt sick.

A very long phone call between him and his mother ended up changing his mind about everything. So, George really couldn't blame anyone but himself for the accident. He couldn't blame anyone but himself for keeping the baby. His baby. George also had no one else to blame when he drifted from his friends.

Florida was two years ago and George hadn't really spoken to his two best friends since. He hadn't really spoken to anyone other than his immediate family and Ashlyn. Well, his two year old didn't understand much past very basic words, but he still counted her.

Streaming was limited. George tried to have one every two weeks. The fans hadn't understood what happened between them. One day it simply just stopped and George ghosted them all. He didn't accept text to speech donations and anything involving his old friends was ban from his chat. Half of his fan base took it terribly speculated incredibly insane theories whilst others simply excepted the change.

Sapnap was the first to stop calling. George could almost feel his hurt from miles across the ocean. Karl was next. He briefly wondered if they'd decided to stop together, it was possible. Then there was Quackity. After several paragraphs of why they needed to stay friends went unanswered, he un-added him from every platform. Dream hadn't stopped, although the conversations didn't hold any depth anymore he still received texts. Three to be exact. One on George's birthday, one on Christmas, and one on new years.

It was the eve of his twenty fifth birthday that everything came crashing down. His family was out of town and had apologized profusely for not being able to make it. So alone with a fussy two year old George lit the candle to his tiny cake and waited for the text.

It always came precisely at midnight.

Dream: Happy 25th birthday George:)

He blew out his candle and rubbed along his daughter's back. She'd fallen asleep on him after the small tantrum, about god knows what, and George was determined to keep her that way.

Maybe it was pity. Maybe it was another accident. Or maybe George had finally hit rock bottom.

The call rang loudly through his empty apartment. It was still a mess from the day of playing he'd done. Little tea party's and miniature bowling. Terrible twos meant he couldn't take an eye off of Ashlyn or she'd break something.

"Hello?"

George's gut churned while he readjusted Ashlyn's sleeping weight.

"George?"

"Hey, Dream."

The silence felt extremely loud. George wished it hadn't been like this. That maybe he'd just told his friends about his baby and not pushed them all away. Because maybe then he wouldn't be crying silently to Dream who shouldn't have even answered the phone.

"Are... what's... George where." The man quietly regrouped himself. "How have you been?"

"Good, good," he immediately said before breaking a bit. "Not good."

"Wanna talk about it?"

"You answered me," George whispered stupidly. "I didn't think you would. I've... it's been two years and..."

Dream huffed a faintly familiar laugh, "just because you stopped being my friend doesn't mean I stopped being yours."

George tried to play it off with a laugh, really, he did. It sounded strangled and somber and it wasn't even a laugh it was more of a quiet sob. Dream remained silent on the other line most likely in shock of concern George didn't know. The soft breaths of surprise due to George's voice or his blatant display of emotions, were the only thing the older man had to go by.

Eventually concern must've gotten the best of him, "George?"

"I have a um... I have a baby. A daughter," he finally said. "I have a two year old and I didn't know how to tell you and Sapnap when I left."

It was like word vomit. All syllables ran together in a hurried fashion, almost as if they'd gone out of style by the time George spoke.

"You... Really?"

"Yeah," George said. His nerves were skyrocketing. He wanted to pace, to run, but Ashlyn was finally asleep and he wasn't going to disturb her.

"Congratulations?" George wiped his nose on the collar of his shirt and hummed. "Who's... the mother. Are you guys still...?"

"No," he replied. "She's in the states somewhere. We haven't talked since she brought Ashlyn to me."

"The states?" Something finally clicked, "it happened when you visited?"

George placed his chin on his daughter's sleeping head breathing in her baby shampoo, "yeah. Honestly, haven't been to another party since you and Sapnap dragged me to that one. Was a bit distraught after..."

"Fuck, George." Dream sounded apologetic. "I get it I guess. And you're not kidding?"

"No, I'm not. And It's not your fault," George reassured Dream's silent guilt. "I was the one that slept with the girl. And *I* decided to keep the baby." A quiet whisper, "It's not your fault, Dream."

Comfortable silence sat between them and George realized he missed this. The calls that ventured late into the evenings. Each always included Dream's voice and easy conversations. George heart ached within his ribcage. Heavy and weighted down, he tried not to hope for more than this one phone call. He didn't deserve the friendship after how he'd ended things.

"Sorry for calling," he eventually said. "I think I'm just lonely on my birthday and not thinking straight. Fuck." Deep realization hit him like a truck. "I shouldn't have called."

"I'm glad you did." George's bones settle with four words. The worry was still topical but he managed to lean back against his kitchen chair. "I've missed you, dumbass."

"I've missed you too." The admission weighed more than he thought it would. More than Dream would every understand. "How's um... Sapnap? Are you two still living together?"

"Yes," Dream hummed. "He's been involving himself with so many projects I can't keep up. Drives me crazy most of the time." A hesitant pause, "he talks about you a lot. Misses you."

"I'm surprised." George said, "he left a nasty message the last time he texted me. Figured he hated my guts now."

"No one could ever hate you, George." The older man didn't have a response. Instead, Ashlyn cooed and restlessly started to move in his arms. "Is that?"

"Yeah," George mumbled switching his phone to speaker, in need of a free hand. "She didn't take a nap earlier. Which means she's exhausted but fighting sleep."

"Can," Dream hesitated. "Can I see her?"

George frowned, "you want to?"

"Of course I do."

George didn't move immediately almost to stunned. Looking down at Ashlyn, he wondered what she would think. Probably something wholesome and sweet, she was two after all. Scoffing at himself, George put the phone up against a stray can and switched it to video chat. He'd already called might as well bite the bullet and speak to Dream face to face.

Dream, in all his ungodly attractiveness, answered the phone from his gaming chair. It was evening where Dream was, the little window in the back signified the sunset by casting soft light into his friend's room. The set up looked the same from first glance and George took comfort in remembering he'd been there in person. He'd touched all the little figurines lining the walls to

Dream right as well as slept in his bed.

Warm and snuggled deep into his hoodie, Dream beamed at him and shot soft eyes down to George's chest. His expression change was immediate. George expected distaste but the only thing present was awe.

"This is Ashlyn," George introduced. "I call her Ash. Because it's a lot to say when yelling after a two year old.

The child in question refused to pull her face from George's neck muttering her babble of his name. It was a mixture of the word dad and just straight mumbling. George could help but smile softly. Dream had a perfect view of her side profile, the prominent brown hair and familiar features.

"She looks like you," Dream said almost dumbfounded. "Same hair and nose."

George brushed his knuckles over her cheek, "yeah. But her eyes are green, like her mother. Has the same lips as well."

"Did you name her?"

"Yes," he said easily. With a but of hesitation George looked up, "It's going to sound weird, but she's named after you. Sort of."

Dream sputtered and twisted in his chair, "what?"

A soft chuckle entered George's silent apartment, "Ashlyn, means a dream or vision. I just liked the name at first then it seemed to fit." George's words fell quiet and he looked away from the phone, "I owe you everything. You're the one that got me here and... I don't know, I think I needed a part of you to keep with me."

"So you named your first born after me!" George couldn't hold back his laughter at sheer bewilderment in the other man's voice. "You could've just texted me back!"

"She wasn't entirely named after you, idiot. Ashlyn is also a name my sister picked out."

It was then George realized how easy it was to talk to Dream. Two years felt like nothing. The effortless banter and comforting words just flowed like they'd never stopped talking. Like George hadn't become a terrible friend and dropped him.

Dream chuckled resting his head back against his gaming chair, "it suits you, ya know."

"What does?"

"Being a dad." George rolled his eyes and pulled Ashlyn up to hold her gangly little thighs. She was getting bigger, George didn't know how to handle that, it was bittersweet. "All soft and sweet it's endearing, George."

"Right," he said, "this one is a handful. I look away for one moment and she's unscrewing my computer with her toys."

"Sounds like something you would have done as a child."

"Shut up." Another grumble came from his baby and George knew she was awake. By the followed whimpers he knew Ashlyn was ready for bed. George sighed, "I have to go. She needs to be put to bed and I should maybe sleep a little."

"No more all nighters on your birthday?" Dream teased although the words sounded carefully picked.

George huffed, "not anymore."

Dream smiled softly, "okay, George. Maybe call tomorrow we can talk some more if you want."

He paused, "you want to talk more?"

"I always want to talk to you."

George couldn't decipher his churning feelings so isn't he nodded. "Can you not mention this to Sapnap yet. I... just I want..."

"I understand," Dream smiled. "It's your daughter, George. You tell about her yourself."

George only nodded.

"Happy birthday, George."

"Thank you, Dream."

Once the call ended George cleared away his birthday cake and walked Ashlyn to her crib. The second he leaned down to let her rest her screams returned. George tried placing a blanket in the crib as well as her favorite bunny but Ashlyn refused to sleep alone.

He wasn't supposed to, his mother had reprimanded him enough about it, but George was tired. Ashlyn went willingly when he picked her back up. Walking the two of them to his own room, George let his baby crawl up to the pillows on his bed. Her chunky fingers splayed over the pillowcase as if telling him to hurry up.

Smiling, George drew back the blankets and pulled Ashlyn close his chest kissing her forehead a moment later. Once he'd rearranged the spare pillows on the other side of Ashlyn's back, so she didn't roll off the bed somehow, he settled down to hold her.

"Night, night," She mumbled.

"That's right, baby," George whispered. "Night, night."

He was a light sleeper now, newly introduced due to the baby in his arms, so any movement Ashlyn would make would wake him. Yet they both seemed to sleep better like this, together.

~

"Ash. Sit still for me." George restlessly pulled the child back into his lap and handed her a toy. It sedated the need to run for a few moments at least.

"So, you," Dream said through the speakers of his computer. "The mid twenties guy that could barely remember to feed himself, has been taking care of a baby?"

George smiled and softly brushed Ashlyn's hair back. Two hairbands were around his fingers while he worked with the feathery soft strands on the tip of her head.

"Yep."

"And she's still breathing," Dream pointed out. "And seems very happy."

George chuckled, "I'm offended on how little faith you have in me being a good parent."

"Well," his friend drawled. "You can't blame me when I was the one checking to see if you've eaten or not. Or taken a bath."

"Bath!" Ashlyn clapped her hands and looked up at George.

He shook his head and kissed her nose, "yes. Bath." A glance at Dream, "she likes baths."

"I'm not being rude alright," that was always how sentences started when they were rude. George raised a skeptical brow and tied the last ponytail in Ashlyn's hair. He wasn't going to bother with the bow, George knew she'd rip it out immediately. "But I'm a bit freaked out."

George snorted and tickled his restless baby, "tell me about it."

Dream tilted his head and George feigned aspiration.

"It's like looking in a mirror sometimes." Ashlyn giggled and dropped her weight back onto George's chest, begging for more attention. "And then I feel like my mother. And she calls me Dad-"

"Dada!"

"See, I... It has been two years and I'm still freaked out." George shrugged, "I *have* to deal with it, but you don't. If this makes you uncomfortable, Dream, we don't have to continue being friend..."

"That's not what I was saying," Dream reassured. He didn't seem to have a better explanation so instead he looked down at Ashlyn. "You think she'd say my name?"

George, repositioning his restless child, and asked, "which name."

Dream rolled his eyes, "either."

"Hey," George pulled Ashlyn's attention from the toy in her hands and pointed at his monitor. "Can you say hi, Dream? Say Dream for me?"

With a bit of babbling, "Dream."

The man himself lit up like a Christmas tree. A stupid grin split his cheeks and George tried not to feel upset about missing him. He placed rewarding kisses along Ashlyn's cheeks and listened to her signature laugh. High pitched and giggly.

George fixed her her tiny shirt so it covered her tummy and asked, "what are you doing today, Dream?"

"Nothing," he responded. "I don't feel like streaming and Sapnap is with Karl this week."

"Oh," the brunette hummed. "I saw his story about that. So you're alone? That's sad."

"You're alone," Dream countered. He leaned his elbows on his desk and rested his head on them. God, George missed him. Just his presence. Dream used to be his emotional support, and George didn't realize how much he needed to just talk to someone who wasn't his mother.

"I'm never alone," George reassured. "This one is with me 24/7. The only time I get to be alone is when my mother takes her or I go to bathroom."

"So," Dream's voice dropped into the tone George knew well. Clipped and eager to ask a touchy question. "No girlfriend? Wife?"

That broke George mental state. The laughter came up in bouts before it was uncontrollable. Falling flat back on his bed, Ashlyn climbed up on his chest and looked down at him with the sweet concerned brows. George easily pulled her down into a cuddle and turned his head to look at Dream again. Sideways in his vision, but Dream always appeared full of life.

"Wife." George's accent felt thick, "god no. And besides, where would I find the time to date anyone?"

"Was just a question." Dream shifted his chin and flashed a smile.

"What about you?" George looked away and focused on his baby. She'd pulled her small toy from the bed. With chubby fingers she tried to pop the little bubbles of the neon colored silicone. "A wife? Girlfriend?"

Dream hesitate and George noticed, "I have a girlfriend.... But we aren't serious."

George didn't expect anything different but it still seemed to sting a bit. He hadn't acknowledged the long lost feelings for this man, it seemed he never would. He tried to smile, "that's good... I'm happy for you."

The words fell flat despite his best efforts.

"George," Dream sighed. Fuck him for noticing every small change in George's voice. He'd have thought Dream forgot about all his tells. "I didn't know if you would ever speak to me again. Our little..."

"It's alright, Dream." George forced the air into his tone, "it's fine. We hooked up a few times during my visit. That's all it has to be."

"Are you sure?"

His expression was annoyed now, "Dream, I have a child. You live on the other side of the ocean. History is history."

The words seemed to settled whatever Dream was brewing about. His shoulder's dropped their tension and his easy smile returned. George tried not to image someone else kissing him. Kissing that expression away like he'd done long ago. He didn't want to hear it, not even a little bit, because truthfully he'd purposely tried to forget their slip up. It was a drunken night of laughs and jokes about their ship and well...two lonely men with great sexual tension meant another mistake. Or multiple mistakes. So George tried to block it out because that's all it was to Dream, a mistake...but this was what they used to do. Talk. About anything and everything important. George was willing to try it again, because frankly he missed his friend.

"Tell me about her?"

"What do you want to know?" Dream seemed content. And if that was the case George could live with it. Dream's relationship status wasn't going to change his life now. The only person capable of that was Ashlyn. He pulled her closer and listened to Dream break his heart without even knowing...again.

Fine Line

Chapter Summary

George finds rock bottom and drinking with willhm :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Ash!" George groaned pulling her from the ground in one sweep. "You can't eat that. No eat that."

"No!"

"Ashlyn."

"No!"

"Why are you so fussy today?"

His baby yelped but relinquished the permanent marker. George was at the edge of sanity again. Stressed and stretched too thin. Twitter wanted a stream, his apartment was a mess, and he had the worst headache of a lifetime. Ashlyn started the second they'd woken up proceeding to throw three tantrums in one hour. First, it was the little dress she wanted to wear, then it was the raspberries for breakfast, and now it was a goddamn permanent marker.

Right in the middle of the kitchen floor, George took a seat. Holding his vexed two-year-old between his arms he shed several pity tears. The kitchen tile was cold beneath him, a representation of how low he felt. Silently, because he was at a loss on how to calm down this fit, George watched her thrash. Ashlyn just continued to wail and cry, George was willing to wait.

Wait for the storm to calm and be there for the inevitable fallout she'd have. They'd done this before, just never with George in the same boat as his toddler.

It took her a moment to realize but soon the upset babbling ceased. With the lessened attention, Ashlyn physically paused. Standing on the floor between George's sprawled out legs, Ashlyn moved to grip his cheeks with thick fingers. Her brows pinched.

"No cry, dada."

Hypocrite, George thought. The girl, with little tantrum tears left over her own cheeks, had the audacity to tell him not to cry.

George let his eyes flutter shut and felt the stretch of his neck when hanging his head between them. It wasn't that easy, he wanted to tell her. He wanted to talk to Ashlyn and be understood completely. To be able to explain why he was so stressed and why he needed time to breathe. Have her understand why the hell she couldn't eat a fucking permanent marker. But she was two, and although her sentences were getting longer and longer with her upcoming birthday, she still wouldn't understand him for quite a long time.

"I'm sorry," he mumbled pulling up and leveling their gazes. The color of her eyes was enough to

eradicate him most of the time. Either they looked like her mother's soft blue and wrung him dry with memories of bad decisions, or they were soft green and reminded him of someone he couldn't have. Green and a million miles and heartbreaks away. The yellowish tint was prominent today, he sighed. "Dada's sorry."

Ashlyn either didn't understand what he was trying to convey or she did and that's what prompted her little kiss. Sweet, if not a bit little slobbery, George received an open mouth peck between his eyes. And, god, he tried not to break again. Because despite his doubt about the way he parented, Ashlyn still loved him. She was happy, healthy, and loved, George tried to hold on to that thought when calling his mother.

He tried desperately to keep that thought close when she showed up thirty minutes later ready to take Ashlyn from him. George needed a break and was finally ready to admit it.

"Grandma!" His baby hit the ground running when George's mother showed. Yelling her scabbled version of the word 'grandma', he watched her be swept up easily from the ground. Immediately, Ashlyn giggled, dowsed in love and affection.

"My little sunshine," his mother grinned. "Where is your father?"

George peaked further around the corner of his kitchen, still sitting on the floor.

"I'm here."

"The floor again?" His mother seemed to know how he was doing, every time without fail, just by his small actions. He huffed and listened to Ashlyn spill his personal drama with minimal words.

"Dada cry."

"Did he?" His mother raised a brow at him. George shrugged and rubbed his eyes until static replaced his vision. "Did something happen, George?"

"No," he answered only for Ashlyn to correct him with, "Dream!"

That's a title George's mother hadn't heard in a long time. And by the way her face danced from schooled to shocked, it was enough of a tell. George groaned and dug a hand through the mussed strands of hair. He needed to take a long shower and clear his mind.

"You're talking to Dream again?"

"No," George answered immediately then rephrased. "Yeah, maybe."

His mother sighed and leaned her hip against the kitchen door frame. Letting Ashlyn down to play with her stray toys, she mulled over her words. George wondered how many red flags waved when the alias was brought up.

"Are you two..."

George let out a hoarse chuckle, "no, nothing like that. He has a girlfriend or something."

"So..." she tilted her head. "You're talking again. Okay... why?"

Honestly, George wanted to know the same question, "I don't know, mom."

"So you're talking again," she stated once more. "Does he know about Ashlyn?"

A muted huff, "yes."

"Are you still..." The pause was enough for a thousand silences.

"What?" George looked incredulous, his mother only raised an all-knowing brow. "Am I still in love with him?"

"Love!" Ashlyn added unhelpfully. George still smiled at her. He'd hoped she'd learned that word, that was the one he told Ashlyn that one the most.

"Yes," his mother prompted.

George hesitated. What was he supposed to say to that? He wasn't the fall-in-love type. The phrase, when he used it, usually meant in liking or simple infatuation. Love wasn't the right word. They'd talked over a screen for years, and met once. One time, George found it silly to think he could fall in love that easily. In the end, it didn't matter much, Dream was in Florida and George he was in London. Dream had a girlfriend, and George had a daughter. There wasn't much to say about the situation.

He shrugged again, "I was never in love with him."

"Right," his mother hummed and took the hint to move on. "How about I take miss Sunshine and you go out with some friends."

"Go out? With what friends, mom?"

"No, no!" She insisted, "none of this pity party. I know you still have friends. You just don't want to speak to them." Walking away, George watched his mother disappear into Ashlyn's room. "What about the handsome fellow you used to go drinking with? What was his name? Wilson? William?"

George let his back meet the floor, "Wilbur?" A deep groan followed when his mother confirmed his guess.

"Yes!" She said, "why don't you call him up and go enjoy a night out. I'll keep Ashlyn-" George's mother came walking out with Ashlyn's fully packed travel bag "-and you can have fun!"

"Fun," he repeated. George had spoken to Wilbur on and off since dropping off the face of the earth. He didn't know the details of why but Wilbur knew enough to still text him often. He'd probably short circuit if George asked him to go out drinking like old times. "I don't want to burden you with-"

"No!" With the backpack on her shoulder, George's mother picked up Ashlyn again. "It's not a burden, George. Your father and I miss having little ones in the house. And your sister is far from having any for me to care for, if at all. So, let me take her."

George finally pulled himself from the floor and stood in front of his mother's determined expression, "are you sure?"

She can be a handful. And today she's been upset. I just-"

"Honey," his mother placed her stray hand over his cheek. "I'm not supposed to encourage this because I'm your mother but, please go get a drink."

George frowned and leaned into her touch.

She chuckled, "if the stress beneath your eyes gets any deeper I'm going to call in a doctor."

"I'm okay, mom."

"Good," she gushed. "Now, you. My little sunshine, how about ice cream?"

"Ice cream!" Ashlyn replied and George dragged a hand over his eyes. Despite the grandma tendencies, he knew Ashlyn would be taken good care of. Though It still irked George how sad he got to see her go.

He held his arms out to take his baby while his mother brought Ashlyn's things to the car.

Placing her on the counter and said, "you'll be good for dada? Sweet to grandma?"

Ashlyn nodded vigorously. She was already babbling small words about ice cream, and grandma, and park. He let out a very deep breath and pulled her close.

It'd been them for two years. His little accident. From the early mornings as an infant to now with her words and cute miscalculated steps, George really needed to pull himself together or he'd start crying again.

"I love you," it would *never* be a lie George noted.

"Love you." He smiled kissing her cheek before handing Ashlyn, reluctantly, back to his mother.

"You'll call if anything happens," he asked, worried. "I don't care what time it is or what I'm doing just call and-"

"I know," his mother waved off. "A drink! With alcohol! I Love you!"

George laughed to himself as the door shut. Left alone in a messy apartment he forced himself to think about something else. Not of Ashlyn or of Dream or his disaster of life lately. He decided he'd shower, clean up, and... call Wilbur.

~

"You look like hell."

George looked down at his night-out clothes and frowned. He'd gone for black jeans and a nice button-up shirt. It was basic, he knew, but George figured it was enough for a pub.

"Not your clothes," Wilbur chuckled, "*You*. You look like you've been living in the woods. The haunted look in your eyes is a lot man."

George's brows furrowed, "fuck off. I have a lot on my mind."

"Okay, big man!"

"You sound like Tommy."

"Right." Wilbur grinned and held the glass door open to usher George inside. "You can tell me all about your filled mind while I buy us some drinks."

The building was rustic, much like most pubs in their area, and had a lot of people. Some decided to dance up against each other on one half of the room while the other was filled to the brim with booths and tables. Wilbur directed him to a corner with no people then shimmied off towards the bar.

George kept an eye on the people while he cleared off the dirty glass surface. It was sticky and needed a baby wipe if he... George paused then laughed at himself. The table didn't need to be cleaned off for grown men, a child maybe. God, he knew Ashlyn would find a way to lick the surface if she'd been present.

"Good, you're laughing!" Wilbur took a seat in front of him slid over a tall pitcher of beer with an equally large cup. "What are you laughing at?"

"Myself," George said. "I haven't been out of my apartment in a long time."

Pouring himself a glass George downed it in one go. It was bitter and unsatisfying but he knew he'd feel its effects soon enough. Wilbur sat before him with a dumbfounded grin. He wondered what his friend thought of him. A ghost for two years then suddenly they were back in a pub sharing a pitcher of beer. George couldn't stand the odd silence so he simply asked.

"Just want to know what happened to you," Wilbur admitted. "Been a bit worried about you man."

George chewed on his lip and spun his glass around. It made little condensation circles on the sticky table while he chose what to say. Wilbur had been there when he needed him, hell he still was. George wondered if he'd dropped everything to come out with him tonight. Knowing Wilbur, that was probably the case.

"You can't," he sighed, frustrated. "It's going to sound like a joke, and it's not, she's real I just..."

"Ohh!" Wilbur cut in, "you've got a girl! Who is she? George! My little player!"

George scratched the back of his neck, "no, not exactly. She's uh..."

"She's what?"

Looking at Wilbur, George realized he should've told him sooner. There was concern and care filtered behind those fake little glasses he tried to convince everyone were real. Wilbur cared and George had pushed him away.

"A baby." He poured himself another drink and sipped on it, "my baby. She's two."

The silence felt heavy but Wilbur cleared it a moment later, "what do you mean? Like you have a kid?"

George nodded and brought his fist to his lips to keep the liquid down. His tolerance for alcohol was shot, the taste and the feeling.

"Ashlyn," he explained. "I slept with a girl in the states and I... it was an accident."

"You're shitting me." Wilbur looked like he was on the edge of congratulations and horrified glee.

So, to prove the latter wrong George pulled out his phone and found the abundance of photos. He slid his phone over the sticky table and sipped on his beer nervously. Watching Wilbur swipe through his life and say nothing, had him on edge again. His knee bounced below the table while George tried to keep cool.

"She's lovely," Wilbur finally said. "Looks a lot like you as well."

George pulled his device back and read between the lines, "you're uncomfortable."

"What? No." Wilbur shook his head and swirled his own drink.

"You're upset I didn't tell you then?"

His friend tilted an ear to meet his shoulder, "I am a bit upset you didn't tell me. But It's your life George, you don't have to tell anyone anything."

George nodded and felt a bit embarrassed. He was so worried Wilbur would take it in the worst light that he hadn't even thought of the outcome being this. Of if being acceptance. Quiet support.

"Did you feel like you couldn't tell me?" Wilbur asked kindly. "I'm sorry if I came off that way."

George crashed into the metaphorical floor, "no. I didn't... just. I don't know. Fuck. I should've told you Will and... I'm a shit friend and 'm sorry."

He was waiting for a bit of resistance. Maybe a little hostility. Wilbur tended to easily be pushed one way or the other but he didn't expect laughter. The high-pitched chuckle that sounded so familiar, made George melt. Cause, much like Dream, George missed Wilbur like a lost limb.

"You're laughing," George stated with a stupid grin. "Why are you laughing?"

"Oh my, Gogy." Warm hands gripped George's alcohol flushed cheeks. "George! You're a mad man you know that?"

The latter chuckled and pushed away Wilbur's touch, "I guess."

"Gosh, so you've been raising a kid all these times you've rejected my invites for drinks?"

The worried beat in his ears finally died down as Wilbur continued on as if nothing had changed. And in reality, nothing really had. George was still George and Wilbur was still Wilbur. Weird and incredibly supportive. George felt awful for not trusting him enough to share a small piece of life with him, but he was determined to make it up. Starting then and into the future.

They downed drink after drink and by the sixth George was down for the count. He knew Wilbur could've kept going, the man had a tolerance higher than a bull. George, with his post-two-year-old alcohol boycott, was drunk for the first time in a while. Not the fun kind either, it was the kind that drove him to stupid decisions. Decisions like sleeping with a girl at a party and have a baby kind of stupid decisions.

"Thank you," he muttered as Wilbur helped him up to his doorstep. "I've missed you *so* much. It's nice. You're old and understand me."

"I'm glad," Wilbur chuckled finding George's keys in the pocket of his jacket. "But I probably should've cut you off before this. Do you need help up the steps?"

George glanced at the oak wood steps he called home and frowned. The walls were already spinning so stepping up them was going to be a challenge. He tried anyway, holding onto the railing like a lifeline he moved forward. With not even one foot on the first step, George was caught by Wilbur.

The other man only laughed and helped his friend into his apartment. Laid carefully on his couch George watched Wilbur walk to his kitchen. A water bottle and small bucket was placed before him.

"Are you going to be sick?" George grunted in lewd of answering. "Alright, I'll take that as a no."

Before Wilbur turned to leave George grasped his hand, "I'm sorry."

"It's alright man," Wilbur reassured for what must've been the seventh time. "I'm not upset. I forgive you."

He nodded and let go, "you're a great friend, Wilbur."

The door shut and locked tight behind him and George stared at the locked screen of his phone. Ashlyn, in a little flouncy bubble gum dress, smiled happily back at him. He loved her with all his heart. George wanted to call and say goodnight but it was late and she'd have already been out for a few hours by then. Happily sleeping in the crib his mother had bought for their little sleepovers. Not to mention how absolutely trashed he was, his mother didn't need to hear that. So as a last-minute decision, he hit call to someone else.

As it rang, George languidly ran his fingertips over the carpet. Fluffy for the benefit of Ashlyn to play with, it wrapped easily around his index finger. To the right a stray baby toy was just in reach, so he pulled it closer to examine. A plastic keyring of several vibrant colors jangled between his palm. He only briefly understood why Ashlyn could become enthralled in small things like this. The call was on its last ring when it was finally answered.

"George?"

"Hey, Dream." His voice was drawled and George knew he'd regret it in the morning.

"George? Are you alright you sound funny."

"I miss you," he said. "I've missed you for two whole years. That's like... 600 something days."

"I've missed you too, George," his fond voice felt like honey in the older man's ears. "It's late for you, did you need something?"

"When we hooked up," George started with the lack of any embarrassment, "Did you *love* me? Do you *love* me?"

Dream's silence was daunting, "you're drunk?"

"M'not," he lied, although he knew Dream could tell the difference. He always could, George never got away with anything when it came to Dream. "I just want to know so I don't have to think..."

"Babe? Clay, who is that?" The feminine voice in the background made George frown. Each brain cell was hazy in his head and it kept him from realizing his mistake. But after a moment he seemed to remember her, if only vaguely.

"Someone's with you?" It was muffled and hurt and inebriated.

"Yeah, it's just Jade. We were about to watch a movie. Look, George are you sure you're-"

"Oh," George muttered. "Jade, yeah... the girlfriend. Right, Um alright... I'll um," he huffed at himself. "Bye, Dream."

"Wait, George-"

After ending the call, George let his phone drop to the carpet. It buzzed again a moment later followed by the clicks of a text message. He hated himself for doing that, humiliated and plastered, George fell asleep on his couch.

Chapter End Notes

Ahhh I love this story it was so fun and sweet to write. It's mostly done so I will daily upload until it's finished

<3

La Jolla

Chapter Summary

George talks to Sapnap.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They sat In from of each other with nothing but the hum of George's heater and patches scratching for attention on Dream's end.

So, maybe George had lied two weeks ago when Dream asked him if he was okay with their friendship. When he'd insisted they leave their fling in the past. It was all for Dream's sake, he was the one with a girlfriend after all, and George wasn't about to put Dream's happiness in danger. Nor was he going to become a home wrecker over his own extraneous feelings.

"George?"

"No," he said immediately. "I don't want to talk about it. Look, I called because I need to apologize."

"You don't have to."

"I do." He cleared off his desk as he spoke, it was littered with little trinkets Ashlyn had played with before her nap. "I was drunk and shouldn't have called. Just like I shouldn't have called on my birthday. Fuck, we should go back to not talking to each other. It will be easier for you in the long run and-"

Dream snorted, "so you're breaking up with me, again?"

George, stunned, hovered a hand over a sippy cup before relinquishing it to the floor, "I've never broken up with you before. And that's not what's happening now."

"Sounds like it."

The British man sighed, "Dream I'm... I'm embarrassed okay. I don't know."

"Have you told Sapnap about Ashlyn?" If Dream changed the subject either meant he was avoiding the conversation or he had made peace with it. George knew it was the former but he relented.

"No, why?"

"Cause... well. We want you to come visit for Christmas, we have for the last two years."

"Christmas?"

Dream tilted his head while meeting George's wired gaze. It was a warm expression, despite the tension George brought upon them. Dream was always like that, careful and comforting. It's what would forever rip George to shreds in the long run. It's what also kept him tethered to the other

man.

"Christmas, George. You and Ashlyn." Dream shrugged as if he'd made up his mind, "you can stay three months without a visa. It's like a tourist approval or whatever."

George dragged a tired palm over his eyes, "Christmas in the states. With a two-year-old. Dream are you insane! Do you not know how much work a child is?"

A lofty laugh filtered through George's speakers, "come on we miss you. And I wanna meet Ashlyn."

With his forehead unceremoniously smushed on the cold desk surface, George tried to think this through. Admittedly, he wasn't doing much for Christmas, just a visit to his parent's house. In the last two years, George had spent the remainder of the holiday alone with his baby. He'd watched movies and held her until he didn't feel so alone. God, two years ago George would have killed to have a Christmas spent in the states but now... it sounded like a pipe dream. What was he even thinking, Christmas in the states? There was no way it could happen.

"It's still your room you know." Dream's voice dropped to a quiet murmur, a tone above serious. "Down the hall between me and Sapnap. It will always be yours whether you want it or not."

"Dream," George tried, desperation clear. "You should hate me. I haven't spoken to you for years and lied about Ashlyn... why do you want me there for Christmas?"

Dream looked like he'd thought this over many times before, "because I care about you. I always have, George. You could hate me and I'll still have a soft spot for you." George flushed involuntarily burrowing his chin into his elbows. "Sapnap does as well. You just need to talk-"

"Dream!" A moment after his boisterous voice echoed into George's room, the man himself sauntered in. Like a nostalgic memory, George sat stunned before his computer screen. "I was thinking we could eat at... who are you talking to?"

Dream was going to protest but it was too late once Sapnap hung off the back of his gaming chair. Wide-eyed with a slacked jaw, Sapnap gasped. George could do nothing but wave awkwardly.

"George?"

Sapnap looked the same at first glance. George had seen him briefly in his few Instagram posts but that was all. Now he could see just how much Sapnap had shifted. Fit is the only way George could describe it. George figured Sapnap must've found a new gym regimen because the sharp muscles on his arms couldn't appear without hard work. And his hair was dyed a bit darker than his fanbase speculated red.

"Hey, Sapnap," George managed. "Nice to see y-"

"What the fuck, Dream!" Sapnap shook his best friend vigorously. "You've been talking to him and didn't tell me?"

"He didn't want me to! I was just going with what George asked!"

"Fuck George's decision!" Sapnap turned to the screen, an inch away from seething. "Fuck your decisions asshole. Where have you been? You haven't replied to anything I sent you for two years! You know much of a dick move that is?"

"Sapnap," George sighed. "I have a valid reason but I need you to calm-"

"Don't tell me to calm down, George." Sapnap tried to appear vexed but George knew he was simply hurt. He could tell by the creases in his eyes. And the trembling of his fists. Downturned and conflicted, George felt guilty for causing his friends such great distress. "You made us think we did something wrong. Dream stayed in this damn room for weeks wondering 'ahh why did he drop us' and 'wahh was it me?'"

George hid a laugh behind his hand and watched Dream light up red. It wasn't funny... but Sapnap was good at lightening the mood. Even if it was unintentional.

Sapnap chuckled, "it's not funny. George, stop laughing. Whatever, you dick."

"I'm sorry," George exclaimed. "I just. I've missed you too, Sapnap."

The youngest man pouted then reprimanded himself, "no." He shook his head. "You can't win me over as easily as this bozo..."

"Hey!"

"He's a simp. I'm not." Sapnap's voice cleared serious, "what happened George?"

As if on cue Ashlyn started to cry from a room away. George groaned because he had just put her down five minutes before he and Dream started talking. It was nearing the evening and if she didn't receive at least one nap George knew she'd be fussy for the rest of the day. Unlike most two-year-olds, Ashlyn favored her naps, George guessed she received that trait from him. His labored breath was the only warning before he left his two friends hanging.

In Ashlyn's room, the light flicked on quietly while George stepped around in the pastel purple bedroom. The walls were decorated with tiny butterflies and fairies, each picked out by his mother when Ashlyn was a newborn. George wanted to color the room blue but his mother had better taste when it came to decor. It was a plus his baby loved the butterflies so much because they felt like eyesores in his opinion.

George passed the threshold and found Ashlyn looking around with mild terror on her cheeks.

"Hey, baby," he whispered. George reached for her small grabby hands and soothed her little sniffles. Pulling her out of her crib, Ashlyn immediately hugged into his neck. "Not a good nap? Bad dreams?"

She said nothing but his parental name and little babbles of 'bad' and 'no'. George hesitated before leaving the room. If he walked back in to face Sapnap and Dream, that would be it. George would have to explain who Ashlyn was to Sapnap and go through the entire process again. The fear of having his friend despise him more than already plausible would break him all over again. Yet that little bit of happy hope was enough to move him.

Despite his fear, with soft steps and aspiration of Ashlyn falling back asleep, George took back his seat before the computer. Dream's gaze flicked from Sapnap to George then down to Ashlyn within a second. Then a familiar smile broke his cheeks.

"And what the fuck kind of excuse if... oh?" Sapnap's expression appeared very confused, "who's kid is that?"

George made small circles over Ashlyn's back and felt her breath even out again. Warm against him, he tugged her just a little bit closer, fixed her tiny shirt, then spoke slowly.

With a heavy voice, "Mine."

Sapnap snorted, "sure." A small pause of realization. When he looked to Dream he found no hint of a joke. "Wait, really?"

George chuckled and rested his chin on Ashlyn's head, "she turns three January 3rd. Do the math Sapnap."

Dream snorted and looked up at the younger man. Sapnap's eyes were squinted into slits while his mouth counted god knows what. Numbers, days, the months? My god, George realized he was singing the months of the year to figure out the situation. Suddenly, everything widened and Sapnap brought both hands to his head.

"June. Summer. The girl. George!" Ashlyn shifted at the sound and George reached to turn the volume down. "What the hell, do you not know what a condom is?"

"Sapnap," Dream reprimanded with a sour expression.

"Don't you usually call it a rubber?" George smiled, "she was on birth control."

"And?" Sapnap looked horrified. "That doesn't mean you just raw dog it dumbass. You could've gotten an std or..."

George hummed and looked down, "her name is Ashlyn."

"Jesus," Sapnap said. "I need to sit down."

Somewhere in the back of George's mind, he knew this would be how Sapnap reacted. Not exactly disappointed nor was he happy... he just was. He was one of the hardest people for George to predict. The spontaneous tendencies and dire need to always have the last word. They only stared at each other.

"It's why I pushed you guys away," George said after a minute. "I didn't know how you guys would react and..." he shrugged.

"Well one, fuck you," Sapnap sighed. Plopped down on the edge of Dream's bed, he listed off his offenses. "Two, you are a dumbass like 100%. And three well... she's cute and has your nose."

"Thanks?"

"Look," Dream cut in. "I want you here for Christmas. Sapnap?"

"What?" The younger man sputtered, "Christmas? He just drops that he has a child and now you're talking about fucking Christmas." Sapnap fanned himself, "I need a minute."

George smiled into Ashlyn's hair and rocked easily in his gaming chair. It wasn't the worst reaction, he could work with it. Surprised Sapnap was much better than disappointed or disgusted.

"So," Sapnap finally uttered after a dramatic silence. "You drop off every platform and strip us from your love and affection because you had a child?" George huffed with silent confirmation. "Why the hell did you think that was a good idea?"

His shrug didn't feel like enough explanation, "I don't know." Neither were his words.

"George!" Sapnap reprimanded, "you were supposed to move in with us! She could've been the Dream Team baby!"

"Sapnap," Dream deterred.

"Fuck off, Dream. I just don't understand why he didn't think we would accept it?" They both turned to George at the same time but he wasn't looking. George sat stunned to silence, disassociated into another world while soothing Ashlyn's back.

It was different back then. Dream was all over him in more ways than one and Sapnap wanted a friend to party with. Someone to drink and help him scope girls out with. They wanted their friend from England who'd stayed up until insane hours of the night to fuck around with them, they wouldn't have wanted a parent or a newborn. George couldn't very well have brought a baby into all of that. The house felt like a frat when he was there, not exactly somewhere to raise a child. So, he'd responsibly chosen to stay in London. Keep Ashlyn safe and happy, it didn't matter if it cost him the rest.

"George?"

The latter blinked and looked up at the screen. His two closest friends looked expectantly at him and something seemed to ache. Because he could have had that, he could've had them. He didn't like to wish things different because then he wouldn't have Ashlyn, but sometimes in the back of his mind, he indulged. Because in another life he would've come back and never received that call. In another life, George would've had his visa approved. He would have moved in. He would've had Sapnap to play around with. And he would've had Dream, but he didn't and that wouldn't change.

He shrugged, "I'm sorry."

"That's it? No explanation at all?" Sapnap's voice was hurt and George knew he was walking a fine line of anger and grief.

"What am I supposed to say Sapnap?"

"Anything, George! Why the fuck did you just ghost us?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"Like hell, I wouldn't!" Sapnap stood again, voice raising everyone's attention. It was angry, and George felt terrible for causing it. He felt terrible for harboring his own piqued attitude as well.

"You're my best friend and then you just left. And said *nothing*. So, *fuck*ing explain that, George."

"Sapnap," Dream tried, although it was in vain. Once Sapnap got started he wouldn't stop. "He doesn't have to."

"I think he does," Sapnap countered with a glare. "I think we both deserve an explanation. Dream is just too nice to ask you for it. But I'm not. Tell me what the fuck-"

"Because!" He raised his voice a little too loud. "Because, Sapnap! You wanted someone to make bad decisions with. Get drunk and do stupid shit. And Dream, you wanted-" he waved an upset wrist. "You wanted to fuck around. Go to parties. How the fuck was I supposed to bring a baby into the middle of that?"

They both remained silent.

"Explain to me how I was supposed to bring a newborn baby into all of that," George scoffed. Ashlyn was awake now, whining and gripping at his shirt. "Tell me how I was supposed to take away all of your fun because of my mistake and not feel like shit about it? I wasn't going to do that, it wasn't fair to either of you."

"George," Dream's expression looked like something mixed between sadness and pity. Sapnap

appeared gutted, paled, and guilty. It was too much.

Ashlyn pulled on him and he knew he had to go before she started crying again.

"I have to go."

"George wait," Sapnap tried. "I'm sorry I didn't mean..."

"It's fine Sapnap, it's not your fault." He moved his mouse towards the red end call, "it's mine. I'll talk to you guys later."

George had never felt so heavy after leaving a discord call.

~

"You have the face again." George's mother looked knowing over the restaurant menu. A small cafe in the far end of the city was one of George's favorite. It consisted of pasta, macaroni for Ashlyn, and old people. The cafe was the one place no one ever recognized him. He loved his followers but it was a bit inconvenient trying to explain who Ashlyn was when seen.

George raised a brow, "what face."

"Roni!" Ashlyn cheered as the waitress set down a tiny bowl. "Dada look!Roni!"

"Yes, baby," George sighed and pulled the bowl away. "Macaroni. But it's hot, we have to wait a minute."

"The 'I talked to Dream face'," his mother said. "I'm starting to not like him. What's his actual name? Chis? Cam?"

Blowing cold air on Ashlyn's macaroni, he said, "Clay. And it wasn't him this time. It was Nick, Sapnap."

"She can do that." George looked up. "Ashlyn does it at my house. She knows when it's too hot."

"Right." He frowned, "I suck at this."

Ashlyn sloppily gripped her spoon and dug into the cheesy dish. And, like his mother said, she knew how to cool her food, George felt slightly like a failure.

"You don't, honey." The words were sincere. "It's your first, you're still learning."

"First," he repeated and added, "and the last. I've had the experience, I sadly don't want another baby."

"That's fine," his mother smiled. Her shrug was mischievous, "never know you might have another accident. Then miss sunshine will have a sibling."

George's expression soured, "no. God, please don't say that."

"I'm kidding." The tension in George's shoulder seeped out as he dug into his pasta bowl. "But I do think she might need a mother someday."

"She has you for the motherly figure," George dismissed. Ashlyn was content, eating her macaroni in the messiest way possible, George didn't see the need to find a partner.

"It's not entirely for her," George's mother said. That pulled his attention up again and he already knew what was coming. "You need someone, George. I want to see you happy again."

"I am happy, mom." Looking away George wiped his daughter's cheeks and pushed her hair back.

"Fine, fine." George was glad she was willing to drop the conversation because it was one he wanted to avoid for the rest of his life. He was content to raise Ashlyn alone and grow old by himself. The drama of dating had been too hard before. People were shallow, people were horrid, people dated for what they could get rather than for love. "Tell me about Dream then."

"Dream!" Ashlyn cued in on the words she knew. "Dada likes Dream."

George huffed and pulled a straw full of water for Ashlyn to sip on.

"They want us there for Christmas," George said. "Him and Sapnap invited us to come stay."

"Saps," Ashlyn said and babbled an entire conversation to her macaroni. "Dream. Saps. Roni. Dada."

"In the states?"

"Yeah."

His mother's raised brow was accusatory but George didn't understand what it meant.

"Are you going to go?"

That was laughable, "mom, I have a two-year-old. She'd have to sit through a 9hr flight and it was stressful enough by myself. I can't imagine it with a toddler."

"Well, you know once she has her little game she's good for four hours or more. And if you book it as an overnight flight you can just rock her to sleep while you wait and she'll..."

"Wait, wait." George held up a hand and swallowed a piece of chicken. "You think I should go?"

His mother shrugged, "you've done nothing but wallow for the last two years."

George stared with a slackened jaw, the expression made his mother laugh.

"Come on honey." She smiled, "I know you want to go whether you said so or not. You miss them, I can see it all over your face."

"But mother..."

"You're a good parent George. I have faith you won't let anything bad happen to Ashlyn." He glanced at his baby and sighed. "And if something does, like she gets sick, I'm only one call away. And I'm sure you're friends have reliable parents you could talk to."

"It's on the other side of the world," George couldn't admit his fear nor his loneliness. "And the last time I went...nothing turned out the way I planned."

"You had Ashlyn." His mother filled in, "but she's also been one of the best parts of your life. What if going could be another best?"

"You sound like an enthusiastic promotional quote."

"Ah," his mother clasped her hands together. "If you go me and your father will take that Bahamas trip he's been planning for years."

George snorted, "so that's the real reason you want me to go."

"No," she rolled her eyes. "I want you to go because you want to. I stand by what I said."

"I'll think about it."

George had already made up his mind

Chapter End Notes

Ahhhh who's ready for the meetup chapter

(Also George calls her mom instead of mum because I'm American and didn't think before writing half of this. So just go with it)

Thanks for reading <3

Heather

Chapter Summary

George is in Florida :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"This is insane, this is a dumb decision."

"No, it's not!" Dream's voice was a safe haven within the chaos of the airport. "Calm down. If you freak out so will Ashlyn."

"Wow," George replied blandly, hoisting Ashlyn up higher on his hip. "Didn't know you could parent, Dream."

"Dream." Ashlyn, tired and ready for bed, mumbled the other man's name and tucked beneath George's neck.

"I'm full of surprises."

George moved up in the line to board the plane and panic started to bubble up.

"Tell me I can do this," he all but begged.

Dream didn't hesitate, "you can do this."

"And you're sure you want us there."

"I'm sure."

George's chest ached with the excessive amount of airport oxygen he sucked in. It felt muggy and crowded compared to when they'd first arrived, but George refused to let this turn him away. It wasn't the plane he was scared of, it was what waited for him on the other side.

"I've got to go," George said. "We're about to board."

"Fly safe George. See you soon! Tell Ashlyn I said hi."

George pocketed his phone and handed his tickets to a flight attendant. She explained to him the procedures for flying with toddlers. Ashlyn had her own seat next to the window with George right beside her.

A new attendant smiled and told George she must stay in her seat for take-off and landing but she was able to sit in his lap for the rest.

Ashlyn was mildly fussy while they leveled in the air, George knew it was from fatigue rather than anything major. So as soon as the red light lit up for them to roam George pulled her free of the little car seat and wrapped them in a blanket.

"Why we go dada?"

With the benefit of being on the last row of the plane, George cranked back his seat to recline against the wall and swaddled Ashlyn until she was comfortable.

"Dream," George sighed. "We're going for Dream, baby."

"Dada love Dream?"

"No, I love *you*." George kissed Ashlyn's cheek and soothed over her back. "You can sleep, Ashlyn. Night, night."

"Night, night." She agreed. And a few moments later Ashlyn was fast asleep leaving George to mull over his thoughts alone.

He'd looked at the pictures from his first visit hundreds of times. Those two weeks consisted of Sapnap with food on his cheeks, Sapnap drunk smiling, Sapnap losing at cards. And in between the abundance of his best friend, there were two of his other. One outside on the terrace of a fancy restaurant.

George wasn't a photographer, but it almost looked professional. The dusk of the day littered the sky with lingering pink and the lift of stars. And the focus of the piece was Dream, leaned over the railing and caught off guard. He looked serene in the photo, nothing but his natural tempting expression. The other photo felt dirty now that George looked back on it.

Dream's room appeared the same as it always did over George's monitor. He'd been surprised how different and exactly the same it felt to step foot in the place itself. All the fine details were close and person, George must've touched everything and felt every trinket. He'd memorized the place. This picture was in between Dream's white and blue bedsheets.

The morning sunlight had broken through the darkening blinds and casted a soft luminescence over Dream's bare shoulder. Six shadow lines ghosted in memory over warm skin. Fibers in the air were caught in camera of when the picture had been snapped. Languid and comfortable, George remembered their soft-spoken conversation as if it'd happened minutes ago. He could hear the lack of lift in Dream's timbre, George's own cast-off defense. With his elbows pillowed over George's blanketed legs, Dream's smile was malleable and sun-kissed. George knew that Dream was completely bare beneath the comforter on his lower half, because so was he.

He'd taken it from above, just to get Dream's reaction when he'd strung his fingers gingerly through those appealing blond strands. It was sweet then. Hopeful and the aftermath of what George figured was love. Of care. Or the start of it at least.

It didn't take but two more days to figure out it was just a fling for Dream. God, It only took two days to figure out George had lived up to the other man's fantasy. To understand that the idea of him had been fulfilled after a few breathless nights. Because at that party, George wasn't the only one to receive action. Dream hadn't even looked for him after a while, far too caught up in someone else. Done and ready for a new challenge. In all seriousness, it was the reason he'd agreed to Ashlyn's birth mother in the first place.

Everything for George seemed to be caused via the butterfly effect from Dream. His career, his feelings, his baby. He didn't know whether the universe was setting him up to hate or fall deeply in love with Dream. Honestly, both were an easy task.

George set his phone down and pulled Ashlyn a little closer, he forced himself to sleep.

His dreams were littered with worry and the memory of shared morning laughter. Memories of being cared for.

~

They'd been here before. Staring at each other from the other side of the Florida State airport. He'd been relieved then. All that had crossed his mind was, *finally, finally, finally*. Now George ached with the sheer pain of nostalgia.

There was no hug this time. There wasn't much of anything because the first thing he realized was *her*. Bright as a blue sky with hair dark as a raven, she was a sight for sore eyes. George was picky with the people he found attractive, but he wondered if anyone didn't find something to like about this girl. Dream held her softly around the waist and seemed to speak in mildly quiet tones.

George wanted to go back two years, he wanted to go back so fucking badly. Back to Sapnap hollering at him from far away, back to Dream being shy the first time they met eyes, back to when George was bombarded with people he held close to his heart. Not this.

Not the stiff smile Dream flashed him nor the uncomfortable handshake he was presented with. Or the introductions to Jade who he'd only heard about in theory. George let Dream take his bags to the car while he followed along with a tired two-year-old in his arms.

George watched them from the backseat. He watched how lovely she spoke and how her hair shaped the near-perfect symmetry of her face. How the sun showed just bright enough to add shimmer to her lips. She was perfect and George wondered why Dream had ever bothered with him because if this was his type, George would've saved himself the heartbreak. If this was Dream's go-to type, George would have known good and well he'd have never been good enough.

Dream caught him looking at her in the rearview mirror. And the look Dream gave in response was possessive, as if daring him to keep looking. George only scoffed and looked down at Ashlyn's Ipad. She was all he ever needed, his happy little accident, even if he'd had his stupid hopes up for this trip. George let them simmer and burn out in the backseat of Dream's car, letting go of the nostalgia of his first trip.

They didn't really speak after Dream dropped Jade off somewhere George didn't give a shit about. He was ready to take a shower and be alone. It was as if Dream didn't know what to say to break the silence of the car, and Ashlyn was dosing off on George's arm making their buffer was incompetent. So, they sat in silence until they pulled up at the house and damn George had never been so happy to see Sapnap.

Running down from the porch, the younger man came with open arms only to stop before Ashlyn. She blinked up at him and waved. Sapnap waved back and looked worriedly at George, he only huffed.

"Ash, this is Sapnap." George shut the car door. "Give him hugies. He'll like a hugie."

"Saps!" Her toddler arms opened wide so Sapnap bent down and welcomed the sweet embrace. "Dada likes Saps."

"Saps?" Sapnap grinned, "I have a nickname?"

George nodded, "she hasn't gotten ahold of the 'n's so it's saps for now."

"What about Dream?" Sapnap asked Ashlyn. She perked up at the name. "Do you have a nickname for Dream?"

"Dada loves Dream." George stiffened. "Christmas for Dream."

Sapnap raised a brow, but all George could do was witness Dream's expression sour. Stood a few feet away, as if he'd contract some kind of disease from George, Dream appeared disgusted. And what the fuck was George supposed to say to that expression? It was the one he'd been afraid of the first time he introduced Ashlyn. Now come to life he wondered if it was because they were in person.

"Christmas with us," Sapnap nodded in an attempt to move on, "she has a British accent. I love it."

Dream turned on his heel and George called after him, "Dream, wait..."

"Dream!" Ashlyn said holding Sapnap's hand and pointing the other. The other man didn't stop, instead, he disappeared into the house a moment later. Ashlyn pouted and sniffled. Her restless sleep on the plane was definitely pointing to a meltdown now. The alligator tears came a moment later and Sapnap looked lost.

"Shh," George swooped Ashlyn from the ground. "It's okay, baby. It's okay. Come on how about we go inside. Take a bath? Eat some food?"

"Bath," she mumbled already latched on to the idea of her bath toys. George was sure to pack them in her bag before they left.

"I'm sorry," Sapnap scoffed. "About Dream. He's been weird since this morning. Jade was being difficult about him picking you up from the airport."

George waved a dismissive hand, "it's fine."

Sapnap grinned, "nice to see you, Gerge."

"Oh god," George groaned, rubbing over Ashlyn's neck, "not this again."

"But Gerge. Baby. Sweetums. It's been so long." Sapnap tugged on the sleeve of his T-shirt. "I've missed hearing the sweet, sweet cadence of your voice, Gerge."

"I'm not doing this with you now," George chuckled. "But I've missed you Sapnap."

"Aww," Sapnap pulled George and Ashlyn in for a hug. And maybe this wouldn't be the worst trip of his life. Dream might have his own personal issues he needed to deal with, but Sapnap was the same. Joking and pulling him in for hugs of affection as if nothing would ever change. It healed something George had left unattended. "You are so cute. We're going to be best friends," he said to Ashlyn, it pulled a giggle out of her. "Come on guys. I got Dream to cook his homemade pizza."

"You did?" George immediately perked up at the mention of food. And not to mention that certain pizza, it was memorably one of the best things George had eaten in the states.

"Come on and welcome to our humble abode."

It was the same as before. Big and open with windows letting the light in. The dent on the hallway wall, from George and Sapnap's past play fighting, remained. George could only smile as Sapnap brought them to his old room.

It was the same as he'd left it. Even the miss-placed pen on the desk lay untouched. George wondered briefly if they'd even stepped foot in this room since he'd been here.

George set down his luggage and placed Ashlyn on the bed. Sapnap dashed out of the room after mentioning food again. Left alone George stared at his baby and his baby stared back.

"Hugies." Ashlyn nearly demanded. And George wasn't going to complain.

He sat down beside her and let his baby cuddle into him. He'd need to change her because, although almost potty trained, she must've had an accident from the time between the airport and Dream's house. It was all a lot but, they'd done it. The plane, the girlfriend introduction, and all the memories. George was back in Florida once again.

~

"Bath bath!"

"So you woke up at 4 am to feed her?" Sapnap looked dumbfounded from the other side of the bathroom floor.

They were sat on the floor as Ashlyn played around in a bubble bath. Dinner was just as memorable as last time. Sapnap tried to outeat him with pizza but George knew his limits now and let the other man win. Dream sat quietly while looking at Ashlyn oddly every few minutes. As if wondering if she was real or not. His baby made faces at him in return and George let them be.

"4 am on the dot." He poured water over Ashlyn's head with practiced ease to not get it in her eyes. "And then she wouldn't go back to sleep unless I rocked her in my gaming chair."

"Fuck," Sapnap hissed.

Ashlyn babbled, "bad. Dada, Saps bad."

"I know, baby," George raised a brow at his friend. "Sapnap needs to watch his mouth."

"I'm sorry, shit, oh fuck! Sorry I mean fork." Sapnap buried his face in both hands, "I'm shit at this."

"It's alright." Ashlyn held out the rubber duck and squeezed the water from it. "I was bad at this too. But I figured it out."

"Yeah, all alone. Like a dumbass."

George was too tired to protest. Instead, he let Sapnap catch him up on his adventures with Karl. Including his future streams as well as the next season of their podcast. It wasn't until the most recent visit recap did Dream come knocking. Timid on the oak door, Dream stuck his head in.

"I um," he glanced around skittishly. "Can I join?"

"If you want," George shrugged. "We're giving Ashlyn a bath."

Sapnap took that as his immediate sign to leave. "Yeah! Here you can take my spot. I want more pizza anyway."

George tried to convey how much he didn't want Sapnap to leave with his eyes but the younger man ignored him. Slipping back through the door Dream entered and shut it behind him. George let out a heavy sigh as Dream took a seat.

"Hey."

"Hey," George replied, all defenses up.

A beat of silence.

"I'm sorry about earlier. On the driveway."

"Whatever," George muttered. Ashlyn's brows were pinched as she looked back at her father's grim expression. She handed him her rubber duck. "I don't care."

"Looked like you did."

"Well, looked like you didn't," George quipped.

"I was dealing with a lot this morning." It was a sad excuse but George was a sadder man because he let Dream have it. Ignored, George moved to wash Ashlyn's back with the mini baby soap he'd brought along.

"Sapnap said it was about your girlfriend."

"She's a lot," Dream retorted. And George only hummed. The sigh felt like a surrender, "George?"

"What?" He hadn't glanced at Dream since he'd walked in. Instead, George focused on Ashlyn and her happiness about bath time.

A hand, tender like the one in his memories, tilted his chin back to its inhibitor. Dream, leaned against the wall, tilted his head. "Just need you to look at me for a minute."

George knew those eyes. The way Dream looked so in awe and so in love, George wasn't fooled by it anymore. It was a form of manipulation, or at least that's what he convinced himself of long ago, a way for Dream to prey on his weaknesses.

He wouldn't fall for it again, "no, not when you're looking at me like *that*."

With his hand pushed away, George rinsed Ashlyn's body and looked for her towel.

"What?"

"Nothing," George said. And they left it alone.

"Can't believe you did this all on your own."

"Eavesdropping much?"

Dream frowned and dragged a hand through his hair. George tried not to look, he tried not to feel so helpless for doing it anyway, he failed at both tasks. Dream as if he'd walked out from George's former memory, sat with him on the floor completely at a loss.

Drained like George himself, he wondered if Dream had slept alright. The lines around his right eye were back and they only showed when Dream's insomnia kicked in. George wondered if Dream's girlfriend knew about that, he dismissed the thought immediately. He wasn't going to compare himself, because God knows he'd never win.

"Dada, bath. Duck."

"Yes, baby. Duck." George dunked the duck and listened to Ashlyn's familiar giggle. When he glanced up at Dream that grim expression was back and George finally had enough of it, "what?"

"What?" Dream always looked dumb caught off guard like that. The slacked jaw and fast blinking eyes.

"Every time Ashlyn does anything you have that stupid look on your face." He gestured vaguely. "It's not a nice expression, Dream. You said you were okay with having us here so what is-"

"Oh... oh!" Dream rushed to cover his tracks. "No. It's not about her or you. It's me. I've..." he groaned. "Jade wants kids."

"Oh?" George sat flat on his ass facing Dream. While crisscrossing his knees he asked, "and you don't?"

"Fuck no," Dream chuckled. "I'd be a terrible parent."

"That's fair," George managed to say. Something in him sank a little further. "What did she say."

"That being with her would change my mind." Dream's eye-roll felt personal, George stifled a laugh. "And the second she saw your baby she freaked. I just, ugh. I don't want kids. Like ever."

George hummed, "neither did I."

Dream shifted to rest his elbow on the bathtub. With his chin atop his arm, his nose was in reach of Ashlyn's bubbly fingers. "But you're cute. Aren't you, little Ashy."

"Ashy," George snorted. "You have a nickname for her?"

Ashlyn gripped Dream's face and laughed at the leftover bubbly residue, "I think Ashy is cute. Like your Dada's knees huh. All dry and Ashy."

"Fuck you," George chuckled. "My knees are moisturized."

"Bad, dada!"

Dream's grin progresses to only be described as shit-eating. "Badboyhalo would have a field day with her. Two peas in a pod."

"Yeah." George watched Dream's smile turn from him to Ashlyn. She picked up a handful of bubbles and smeared them over Dream's freckled nose.

George expected him to pull away and wipe them off, not this. Not Dream's smile widening further, not Dream laughing at Ashlyn's giggles, and especially not the tiny kisses following it all. Dream swiped a small bubble cluster over Ashlyn's nose then kissed her grabby hand.

"Dream!" Ashlyn said. Dream only confirmed her name matching.

Three months was going to break him, George realized quickly. He just hoped Ashlyn didn't get too attached.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for readingggg

Drops Of Jupiter

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Put the chocky chips in here! Yeah, just like that!"

George smiled at the tilted image of Ashlyn and Sapnap baking Christmas cookies. Sat at the kitchen bar George tried to keep himself awake, but his arms were so comfortable on the cold surface of the counter. Ashlyn the simple baby she was, slept easily through the night while George lay awake and restless in a foreign bed.

"More chips!"

Sapnap's laugh was a welcoming lullaby to George's near slumber, "no! We can't have too much. We need some for later."

"Otay, Saps."

George's eyes fell closed while he listened to them bicker. He was on the cusp of sleep before Dream decided to join them. The smell of summer hit George immediately. Warmth and memories of swimming in the pool trickled in without warning or notice. Sweet kisses and the lingering taste of melted popsicles, Dream smelled like a vacation from reality. And he looked the part as well.

When George peeked over his elbows he caught the man drying his freshly washed hair with a blue towel. Every inch of his tanned ivory skin was flushed perfectly from the heat of the shower water. George felt guilty for constantly checking him out the way he did, dirty and in the wrong somehow. So, most of the time he tried not to look at Dream unless entirely necessary. Even then the man himself seemed to haunt him. Awake or asleep, George suffered in silence.

"Here wanna taste it?" Sapnap swiped a bit of cookie dough from the spoon and held it out for Ashlyn to try. George knew it wasn't the best thing to do, but as long as he didn't let her eat more than a little taste he was fine with it. Sapnap turned out to be great with kids, something to do with having younger siblings.

"You look exhausted," Dream said quietly. Just loud enough for George to hear over Sapnap and Ashlyn's chaos as well as the obnoxious Christmas music on his portable speaker. "Did you sleep?"

George shook his head against his arms, "no."

"Why not?"

"I dunno." It was being in this house again, It was sleeping in a room that still felt foreign even if it had once been familiar, It was missing Dream because he'd once warmed the other side of the bed.

Dream frowned while he brushed George's hair from the brown eyes. His touch lingered for a moment too long. Rested in wayward hair, Dream seemed to remember the familiarity touch.

George wanted to melt at the contact but he forced himself to stiffen instead. Memories with Dream were hard to decipher, and the softness had always felt like a trap. George pulled away from temptation and sat up straight.

Dream noted the defense but brushed past it by asking, "what are they making?"

"Cookies." George tried desperately to rub the exhaustion from his eyes, "I think. It honestly just looks like a mess."

"You should go take a nap," Dream suggested.

That was laughable, "I can't. They need to be supervised."

"Sapnap's twenty-one," Dream said. "And he handles kids. I think she'll be fine if you take an hour nap. I'm also here it's not..."

"It's also not your call," George snapped. "For someone who doesn't want to be a parent, you sure have a lot to say."

Dream looked hurt by that comment, "what's that supposed to mean?"

Maybe George was too sleep-deprived, or maybe he'd just let his emotions bubble to the surface when he shouldn't have.

"Nothing," he recovered. "I'm just tired. M'sorry."

"Dada!" Ashlyn called with hands full of icing. "Pretty!"

George needed sleep, "Sapnap why'd you let her-"

"She took the spoon from me!" Sapnap protested like a child. "But it's okay it's just icing, George."

"Yeah, but if she gets it on anything other than her hands she'll freak-"

Sapnap wasn't fast enough to take the bowl away so a moment later Ashlyn tipped it over. Half mixed icing drenched his baby from the neck down.

She huffed a few times before feeling how sticky the icing was. Ashlyn's little hands attempted to move the liquid off before the tears came.

"Dada!" She all but shrieked. George sighed and hopped down from his stool. With the right amount of sleep, George would have scolded Sapnap but he was too hazy to care.

"George, I'm sorry. It was an accident."

"I know," he muttered taking Ashlyn into his arms, icing and all. "It's fine. Come on baby. No cry it's just icing."

"Dada," Ashlyn blubbered. "I no like it. Dada."

"I know. Breathe." George hushed taking her from the kitchen and into the bathroom. "It's okay. Okay, dada will fix it."

Setting her down on the sink, George pulled a small rag from the towel rack and wet it with warm water. He'll admit he was too tired to do this right now. Too tired to deal with Dream, too tired for Sapnap, and too tired for Ashlyn. There were only two out of the three he could avoid.

"Arms up, Ashlyn. Up up." With stuttering breaths, Ashlyn lifted her arms and George removed her soiled dress. Using the rag, he smoothly wiped the excess icing from Ashlyn's skin.

"Hey." Dream leaned against the door frame. "Need any help?"

George kept a rude comment to himself and said, "yeah. In my room, there's a pink suitcase. Can you pull another outfit of it?"

Dream raised a brow and said, "sure!"

George shook his head and kept the somber attitude until Ashlyn was all clean. He smiled at her. It may have been a bit softer due to his current mental state but the smile would always be genuine when he looked at Ashlyn. With her tear-stained cheeks, he kissed her forehead to make up for his lack of understanding. George had never been good at other people's emotions before, and having a child didn't suddenly change things either. Every day he hoped and prayed his lack of understanding didn't fuck her up in the future.

"Hey, Is this okay?" Dream rounded the corner with a small t-shirt and the warm green oversized pants Ashlyn loved.

"Ballon pants!" Ashlyn excitedly beat George to the punch answering Dream's question. "Dada, balloon pants!"

"Yeah," George muttered. "That's fine, Dream. Thank you."

"Of course."

George dressed Ashlyn silently and the entire time he felt Dream's gaze on him. Silent in the door frame Dream observed him like a lab rat. George missed the old days, when Dream wasn't so weird around him. Back during his first visit when Dream wouldn't shut up, the days of them being best friends. Because now, George could barely stand the silence. He'd always been able to tell Dream's emotions from his words and facial expressions. Now it was like looking for something in a space void.

Ashlyn hugged into George's stomach once she was dressed, mumbling, "love you."

George sighed, "I love you too."

"Wanna go back to Saps."

"Okay." With a small nod, he picked her up and let her stand on the floor. A moment later she took off down the hall and George listened to Sapsnap greet her again.

Stood alone with Dream, George wanted to yell at him. He wanted the confusing expression to go back to the way they used to be. Open, alive, warm, all he witnessed when he looked at Dream was... well he didn't really know.

"You okay?"

What was he supposed to say to that? The truth? If he did George would break down before his friend. Pour his heart out after two years of isolation. About him about Ashlyn, about his life, he couldn't do that now. George figured Dream would either not care or pity him for his bad decisions, so he shrugged.

"You can talk to me you know. Like you used to."

George let out a humorless laugh dragging a hand over his eyes, "yeah sure. Thanks, Dream."

"I'm serious," Dream insisted. "I'm here if you want to talk."

"About what, exactly?" Then George scoffed, "I don't know how to talk to you anymore."

"Yes, you do."

"No," George insisted. "I don't."

Dream shifted to lean his shoulder fully against the doorframe. And the other man watched the movement aching with the need for his old affection. The ease of his embrace, it felt pathetic to think about.

"Why do you think that?"

"How am I supposed to talk to you?" George questioned, "like we did the last time I was here, back when I was your lover? Or like we used to over discord? Best friends who talked shit until 3 am. Or like a business partner you greet at the airport with a handshake?" His laugh felt wet with oncoming tears, "I'm so out of my comfort zone right now, Dream. I don't *know* you anymore. Sapnap is the same but you... I don't know you, you're different."

"I'm the same as always, George." Dream's voice was soft, the same tone George used to secretly love when used. "The same person that did all of those things. The same person that cares about you. You know me better than anyone, even myself."

George buried his head between ten fingers, "I don't."

Dream sighed and pulled away from the creaking doorway. With hesitant hands, Dream reached around his friend's shoulders and pulled him close. The other man froze before relinquishing control to Dream's touch. Pushed flush against him, George wrapped timid arms around his middle section. Dream only held him tighter.

"You do." Dream sighed above the crown of George's head. "And I'm sorry. It's been a shock having you back, I think I'm the one who forgot how to act around you."

"Yeah," George agreed. "What the fuck was that greeting at the airport?"

Dream hid his smile in George's hair, "awe of your presence? And Jade, she gets jealous."

George snorted, "why? She's beautiful, I've got nothing on her."

"You're wrong." The words felt like hope. "You have pretty privilege."

George took those words from the air and wrapped them securely around his heart, something to think about later. Even if he'd never be in *her* position again, George would savor any and all complements Dream gave him.

"Not with a size two runway model," George said. "Where'd you find her? The cover of Vogue?"

That pulled a laugh out of Dream, "no, I met her at a party."

"Well," George pulled away from the embraces and righted himself. "Seems you upgraded from me, huh? Good for you, Dream."

It was supposed to sound joking but he knew Dream could see right through him. George pulled Ashlyn's soiled dress from the sink with a fabricated smile.

"George." his name sounded wounded from Dream's lips. "You know that's-"

George brushed past him and said, "come on. Let's go make sure Sapnap and Ashlyn haven't started a fire."

Because really, could he feel jealous of Dream moving on? The answer was no. If he was completely honest, George was happy Dream had, in a way. Maybe he himself would never move on from the smell of summer and the mixed blond hair but if Dream did, and was happy, that's all George cared about.

Because George made his bed and was lying in it, no war, no problem, he'd accepted his fate. In three months he'd leave. In three months, things would go back to the way they were before. And, with a silent vow, George swore he wouldn't cause problems for things like this when his presence was temporary.

~

Dream seemed to snap out of his hesitation after their moment in the bathroom. His affection came easily and casually as time went on. George felt far more comfortable with Dream acting like he used to then when he'd been so careful.

It was the week of Christmas when George realized a major problem. Jade didn't like him. He'd done nothing to spite her. At the airport their greeting was pleasant and any conversation after had been breezy but he heard her talk to Dream.

When George was in the living room with Ashlyn and Sapnap, he overheard her jabs at Dream's interest in him. Asking why he was even here and bitching about how he'd blown off Christmas with her for him. George felt guilty. Despite his lack of interest in her, George didn't want to cause problems for Dream's relationship.

After putting Ashlyn to sleep, tucked between several pillows as a makeshift crib, George set off down the hall. Jade had left a few hours earlier, so George knew Dream was alone in his room. He knocked timidly on the door.

"Yeah, come in."

The creak of the wood felt nostalgic. Summer nights and that godforsaken need to sneak around for the thrill washed over him while he contemplated the threshold.

"Hey," George asked lingering in the doorway. "Can we talk about something?"

Dream, lounged on his black futon couch, raised a stormy brow at him. It made him feel in the wrong, that maybe he shouldn't have bothered.

"About what?"

George chewed on his bottom lip and crossed his arms, "about Jade."

The words had bite in them, "*what* about her."

George frowned and backed off, "I... never mind then. Touchy subject, my bad."

Turning to go back to his sleeping baby Dream stopped him. He looked over his shoulder and found the younger man swiping the anger from his brows.

"I'm sorry. I'm just pissed off."

"It's fine," George reassured. "It wasn't important."

"Tell me," Dream tried. "Please."

George shifted his weight and debated the outcome of this conversation. It could either end terribly or smooth over the rippled lake.

"I know she doesn't like me." Way to be gentle, George.

"She does." Dream's protest didn't sound convincing.

"She doesn't." The words were final. "I've heard the comments she makes. About me and about how I'm taking you from her on Christmas."

Dream scoffed, "She can get over it."

"She shouldn't have to." Dream looked forlorn rested before him. Both hands fidgeted with his phone while he mulled over George's words. "She's your girlfriend and couples usually spend Christmas together. Have you already planned to spend it with her, before I came I mean?"

Dream shrugged, "I don't know. It wasn't serious."

"But it is now?"

He shrugged again and George breathed through his nose, "you know I don't care right?" What a lovely little lie.

"What?"

"I don't care if you're here for Christmas or not," George shrugged the ache beneath his ribs away. "If you already made plans with Jade don't override them for me. It's not a big deal, Dream."

"I invited you here," Dream protested. "That's more important."

George held his hands up, "it's your choice. I'm just saying I don't want to be the reason you two fight."

"Since when have you ever been first to wave a white flag?"

"Since I had a child who will always come first." Dream looked away and George was desperate to know what the hell he was thinking about. He didn't ask, if Dream wanted him to know he'd tell. "Getting in the middle of anyone's relationship drama is not fun to me anymore."

"Not anymore?" Dream snorted and presented that tempting kind of smirk. "You used to love to meddle in my love affairs."

George was the one to look away now. Warm in his chest and cheeks, he silently reprimanded himself for being so weak when it involved Dream.

"Yeah, that was before I realized I would only ever be a conquest." Dream's smile faded quickly, but George laughed at himself. "I was an ass when it came to your relationships, huh?"

Dream tried to recover but failed miserably, "yeah, you... yeah. Always liked to point out what was wrong with each of them."

George finally stepped over the doorframe and started to look at the shelves. Like the pictures on

his phone, the room remained the same only now there were a few new figurines to touch. He picked up a tiny Minecraft villager and smiled.

"You have terrible taste in partners." George reminded, "like the boy with the nose piercing. He was eye candy I have to admit but the attitude." He set the figure gently back down. "Very shallow and money-hungry."

Dream groaned and laid longways on his couch, "fuck. I know."

"Or the gothic girl with the fake Heterochromia eyes." George dragged a finger over the shelf and found one of his old Merch pins still rested within Dream's own.

"Who knew she was on drugs," Dream said. "I just thought she had allergies."

George continued, "or the girl that was obsessed with red."

"I did not indulge in the blood kink!" Dream laughed. "Don't look at me like that!"

"Or the guy that worked at the bar?"

Dream peaked at George from behind heavy hands, "he was normal. Just really boring."

George huffed but couldn't contain his smile. As he sat down on Dream's bed he found patches curled up against a pillow. Soft to the touch she let him pet over her warm fur.

"And what about you?" Dream's voice was curious with an edge of playfulness.

George looked at him with one brow raised, "what about me?"

"What was your terrible tale since I apparently have shit taste in partners."

George looked away, "I don't count, Dream."

During a heavy beat of silence, George continued to pet over patches. Fingers easing through her fur, she rolled over on the bed and showed him her stomach. He felt honored for the small display of trust.

"Why not?" It was barely over a whisper.

"We didn't date." George shrugged, "I was never your boyfriend."

"You didn't want to be."

"How would you have known," he smiled softly, if not with somber undertones, "you never asked."

Standing from the bed George took in Dream's newly stormy brows. This time he knew it was his fault but none of that really mattered, he'd said his peace.

"But anyway," he walked towards the door. "I just wanted to say I won't be upset if you want to spend Christmas with Jade. Me, Ashlyn, and Sapnap are fine here. Pretty sure they'll probably make me watch Christmas movies and wait for Santa."

"I'm not just going to blow you guys off to go have sex with my girlfriend on Christmas eve."

George scrunched his nose, "one gross. Two if that's what spending Christmas with her means have fun. Three wear a condom."

Dream smirked, "why, you didn't."

"Yeah," George drawled. "And now I know how to change diapers and calm down temper tantrums."

Dream's expression softened to a smile, "right. Well, thank you for talking to me about it."

"Yeah, sure."

"I love you!" Dream called as a tease and George threw him a crass hand gesture. "Say it back George!"

"Fuck you, I'm going to bed!"

George didn't stop smiling until he crawled into bed with Ashlyn. And even then when his baby curled into him for comfort the happiness remained.

Chapter End Notes

Ngl this is very not really edited... Oops. I've been split focused on this and the Band AU.

Deja Vu

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Strawberry ice cream, one spoon for two."

Deja Vu

Olivia Rodrigo

The sheets were cold as he pulled them tightly over his shoulders. Each soft morning giggle was enough for George to sink even further upon the man beneath him. Nothing heated, nothing sexual, just him. Both bare besides their underwear George sighed. The wide expanse of tanned skin was laid exposed for him to explore.

A delicate finger traced the sunspots like stars on a constellation, from shoulder to shoulder, rib to rib, finishing just above his navel. It'd forever be engrained in that slow awful mind of his, this beautiful memory. Early morning whispers doused in summer sunlight and *his* laugh.

"You're not real," those were words repeated from years before.

"And you're beautiful," the entrancing response.

"I'll wake up soon." George traced his skin like it was the last time he'd ever touch him because, in reality, he knew it was. Here Dream was his, awake he'd watch from afar and smile as if nothing ever phased him. As if he didn't dream of those summer nights on repeat. "Then you'll be gone."

A gentle palm found home on George's morning creased cheek, "but I'm always here." Caressed across his forehead, he let his eyes close at the feeling of how real it always appeared. Keening into the touch like a needy lover.

He managed a smile, "always here."

His conscience never let the kiss happen. It was always an inch away before both eyes clicked and he was awake again. Torn down from the clouds and released into reality.

George gripped at the unfamiliar couch beneath him and sighed. He hadn't remembered falling asleep. Both eyes widened and panic dropped into his stomach, he didn't remember falling asleep. Where was Ashlyn? He was alone in the living room, the remnants of toys spread across the floor.

Standing up far too fast, he let the black edges clear before he took off down the hallway. She wasn't in the living room where he'd woken. A vague recollection of Dream and Sapnap putting on a movie danced through his panic but nothing seemed to register after that.

She wasn't in Sapnap's room. George left the doors open as he searched. His room was also desolate. It wasn't until he made it to Dream room that the laughter found his ears.

"Dada! Look!" George stood in the doorway frazzled by sleep and panting from exertion of panic.

Sapnap was on his phone on Dream's couch while the other man sat on the floor with Ashlyn. And... Jade. His baby was holding a tiny teddy bear in her lap, one George knew he hadn't bought.

Wiping the lingering panic from his eyes, he spat, "what the fuck guys?"

Dream's easy expression darkened, "you alright?"

"No," George huffed. "No, I'm not. You three nearly...I woke up and she wasn't there!"

"Oh," Dream seemed to realize. "I'm sorry. We just thought you'd want to sleep. You haven't been able..."

"Yeah," George pushed over the threshold and pulled his baby abruptly from Jade's lap. "Next time don't act like you know what I would want."

Sapnap let out a low whistle before Dream's girlfriend piped up, "you don't have to be so upset, George. She was in good hands."

George glared with a rude retort on his tongue before Ashlyn cut in as her savior.

"Dada," she stuffed her tiny bear into his face. "Dream's bear-bear."

He forced the bout of anger from his bones, "Dream gave you a bear?"

Dream stood from the floor and scratched the back of his neck, "we were out yesterday. I thought she'd like it."

George really hated how nice Dream was. It would be easy to move on from him if he'd been a complete asshole, but alas he wasn't. He was sweet, and caring, and someone George would always have regrets about. Forever a dark sun-kiss on his left side brain, Dream would forevermore remain.

"Right," George sighed. "Did you tell him thank you, Ash?"

"Thank you." It wasn't quite pronounced perfectly but everyone cooed anyway.

Jade stood up and brushed her miniskirt off, "I've got to go. My mother wants me over for dinner."

Dream looked away from George and acknowledged his girlfriend, "yeah? Let me walk you out."

"No," she brushed off walking over to George. "I'll be quick. You sit here and play with this sweet thing."

George officially hated her. Jade's acrylic nails pinched Ashlyn's cheeks like an old grandmother. His daughter whined and pulled away from her, tucking beneath her father's neck. As a last hurrah, Jade ruffed up George's already sleep-spiked hair.

"Bye," she blew a kiss to Sapnap before Dream scurried after her.

"Babe, let me walk you out."

The second they were down the hall Sapnap scoffed, "good riddance, whore."

George snorted, "Sapnap-"

"Don't even start." He didn't bother looking up from his phone. "She's flirted with me ever since they got together and now she's on to you. And it's all because of Ashlyn."

"She's not on to me," George said. He sat down on the edge of Dream's bed and tried not to relive his dreams from earlier. His heart had finally found a normal resting beat. "She hates me."

"Doesn't matter," Sapnap said. "She wants a baby for some twisted reason and it's retaliation because Dream doesn't want to raise a kid with her."

Ashlyn leaned back against George's chest and shook her new little bear around. He smoothed over the cowlick in her hair thinking carefully over the Jade situation.

"Dream just doesn't want kids," George stated. "It doesn't have to do with her specifically."

Sapnap rolled his eyes, "you're wrong, he'd do it for you."

The ache in George's chest returned, "you're very funny, Sapnap."

"It's not a joke dude. I seriously think-"

"Stop!" He hissed, "I don't want to hear it, alright? Dream's with Jade and that doesn't seem to be changing."

Sapnap melted into his sad-sweet expression, the one that only occurred when Karl was around. George figured it came from some kind of affection. It didn't feel like pity or guilt, it was understanding.

"He'll always love you more." Sapnap waved a hand, "ya know romantic shit."

"Sapnap," George snapped right as Dream walked in.

The other man raised a brow and froze at the door frame of his room. Tall and dressed in casual clothes, Dream always looked like a masterpiece. A collage of several memories and snapshots George associated him with.

"What'd I interrupt?"

"Nothing," George said while Ashlyn clapped, "Dream!"

He smiled, "little Ashy Ash!"

"Up, up," George tried not to feel jealous watching Ashlyn want someone else to hold her. Dream looked to him for permission before pulling her up and spinning around. Her content giggles were worth thousands.

"As I said," Sapnap muttered scrolling through his phone. George bristled.

"Bear Bear," Ashlyn mumbled having some unintelligible conversation with Dream about the raggedy little bear. "Dada. Dream. Roni?"

Dream's smile panned to George, "I don't understand that."

George shrugged and fell backward onto familiar bedsheets, "something about me you and macaroni."

"Roni!" She clapped.

Sapnap cheered suddenly, a fist thrust into the air. Up like a flash of light, he said, "I'm going to stream. Don't bother me for like three hours!" Halfway down the hallway, they heard him start sputtering into the phone to, who George guessed was, Karl. He huffed over a bit of laughter.

Two years had flown by and Sapnap was even more immature than before George had done his

disappearing act. He liked that about him, how content to just be as Sapnap always was.

The little silence was filled by Ashlyn's meaningless words. Soft and open for interpretation. It didn't feel uncomfortable being left with Dream, granted it never really had before. In the mix of his mental analysis, George felt the bed dip beside him.

Dream held Ashlyn close and leaned back on his arms taking the spot right next to him, shoulder to shoulder. The older man refrained from letting this affect him, but it was hard when Dream was so close. Still beautifully presented in his mind from that dream.

"You're so pretty, huh?" He cooed to Ashlyn tickling her sides. "Always so happy."

"No, no," she said sitting on Dream's chest. "Not nice."

"I'm sorry." Both hands came up as surrender to Ashlyn's pout. "I'm sorry. Little miss bossy. You have your Dada's attitude don't you?"

George huffed with a quiet, "fuck off."

When Ashlyn started Babbling again, Dream brought up his knees for her to lean back against. Content to smile and observe George's daughter, Dream fell quiet.

George found himself tracing Dream's jawline with his eyes. Memorizing the dips and the curves, because something told him this was it. In reality, George couldn't see himself coming back to Florida again. If so to what exactly? Visit? George didn't think he could do this again. See Dream happy with someone else, possibly see Dream marry someone else. George loved Sapnap but he couldn't do this again. If Sapnap really had a problem he'd just encourage him to go to the UK.

"What's wrong?" Dream was looking at him, those green eyes ever so concerned. So completely captivating. George hadn't realized he'd been caught, he was too far in the dark spots of his mind to remember reality.

He looked back at Ashlyn, "nothing."

"Liar." It was a soft whisper, "you're doing that thing."

"What thing?"

"The thing with your eyebrows." George subconsciously touched them. "They scrunch up when you're keeping something from me."

"It's not important," he mumbled.

"Everything with you is always important."

Why couldn't he just be an asshole? George bit the inside of his cheek until the need to spill his guts waned.

"Just don't think I'll come back after this trip," he shrugged and mentally hated himself for spilling anyway. Everyone used to talk about how much Dream bent for George, but within just the two of them, George bent equally as much. "Ashlyn's getting older...I don't know, just don't think I can do this again."

"Yeah. That sounds like a shit excuse," Dream said flatly. "What are you really thinking about?"

He hated being so known sometimes, "you."

"Me?"

George wanted to say he always thought of him, "and Sapnap. I don't know."

Dream sighed and chose to let it go. Ashlyn, with her constant need to be the center of attention, crawled up closer and laid her head promptly against Dream's chest. Both chubby hands gripped onto his T-shirt as if he'd leave without warning. George frowned once again. This was something Ashlyn had only ever done with George. He knew it was a form of baby reassurance and it was bound to be a problem if she was using it with Dream. Ashlyn was getting attached, George internally sighed.

"She likes you more than me," he teased despite the worry.

Dream soothed small circles over Ashlyn's back, "I like her more than you too."

With a grim expression, George scooted closer and rested his head against Dream's shoulder, right below his chin. "You suck."

It pulled a careful laugh out of Dream, prompting the soft fingers of his free hand to come up to caress. George's jawline burned with the familiar warmth. He closed his eyes and let Dream hold them both. Ashlyn tethered to his chest and George to his neck. This was so domestic and comforting it resolved the ache in George's chest. He curled his hand around Dream's shoulder.

"She's second on my favorite's list," Dream hummed, content again.

George nuzzled closer and brushed two fingers over Ashlyn's cheek, "who's first?"

"You."

That pulled a surprised breath from him, "it's not Jade? Or Sapnap?"

"Nope." Dream's smile pressed against George's hairline, "you're my favorite."

"You're an idiot."

Dream's sigh felt like a relaxing after being tense for so long. His touch on Ashlyn's back was slowly lulling her into her afternoon nap and the one on George's jaw developed into skimming through his hair. Tucking the stray pieces around his ear as he had so long ago. Subconsciously, George pressed closer letting his chest sink into the riff of Dream's side. He hadn't been held in so long he felt starved from it. His family's easy embraces only went so far.

"God," Dream mumbled against George's forehead. "I've missed you."

George could only hum, because if he started to agree he might let himself slip from his composure. Here he felt fragile.

"Thought you hated me."

Releasing his grip, George traced over Dream's bicep. He chased the dirty feeling away, the one that made him feel guilty for enjoying being so close to Dream when the man was with someone else. The only thing that kept him from pulling away was knowing this didn't mean anything to him. Dream never wanted George before so he wouldn't want him now. It was logical, it was his boundary line. Drawn foolishly into sand George gave himself a get out of jail free card.

"Really. I didn't know what I did wrong and just felt really bad." Dream droned on, "thought it

could've been about our... you know. But Sappnap wasn't getting replied to either, so I figured it wasn't just me."

"No," George reassured. Ashlyn looked to be easily asleep on Dream's chest, he brushed over her hair once more. "Was her. Already making life a living hell, from her mother's belly."

"You kept her," Dream acknowledged. "Lot of people wouldn't have done that," a bit quieter, "I don't think I would have."

George snorted, "yes, you would have. You're you. Too good to everyone all the time."

"That is true." Cocky bastard, George smiled at his friend. "Maybe."

"This coming from the man that drove..." George snorted, "how many hours was it? I can't remember the words to that song."

Dream frowned dramatically, "we don't talk about it."

That tore a heavy laugh out of George. Chuckling like a hyena, he stuck his nose up beneath Dream's jawline and let his chest shake them both with uncontrollable laughter.

"Stop laughing," Dream said hypocritically. His chest was producing laugh like puffs between words. "It's not that funny, idiot. You'll wake her up."

"I'm sorry," George smiled. "M'sorry."

The silence fell over them again. Blanketed in the warmth of body heat and elation George closed his eyes. He could feel the slow cadence of Dream's heartbeat against his forehead, it was promptly pressed to his pulse point. George hated to admit it but this is what he wanted. When his mother brought up a partner in the future he couldn't get past the idea of Dream and all his glory. It wasn't an option, no matter how much he wished, but George liked to think about it often.

He liked to imagine living here with Ashlyn. Letting her grow up around his friends that loved them, but he also thought about England. Living there wouldn't be hard, he was already accustomed to it. But his mother was right, if he lived there Ashlyn would need something else... someone else.

George knew he was a great single parent, but he didn't want Ashlyn to lack in any department when it came to growing up. Her real mother, after George had contacted her last, still wanted nothing to do with her. All of Ashlyn's papers as well as custody were signed over to George, but he always had a bit of hope. It wasn't to be with her mother, god knows that wouldn't work out, but for her to have a relationship with Ashlyn. Because at the end of the day it was her mother.

George thought about dating and wanted to throw up. He'd also given the nanny thing a thought, but couldn't find the need when he was doing it himself anyway.

"I need to find a girlfriend," George muttered breaking the silence.

Dream's body physically tensed, "why?"

He shrugged, "Ashlyn needs a motherly figure. I won't always be enough."

He looked at his sleeping baby and fixed her shirt, careful not to disturb her slumber. George would do anything for her, even start dating again.

"I don't think that's true," Dream whispered. "A lot of people are single parents. And their kids turn out fine."

"Yeah," he shrugged. "I don't know. If anything it will get my mom to stop pestering."

Dream hummed, "my mom doesn't like Jade."

He hummed. That didn't surprise George at all. Dream's mom could easily see through superficial people, she'd seen straight through George the first time they met. But she liked him, he wondered how it would've gone if she hadn't. She was a very blunt person, he could only imagine.

A deep sigh, "you don't like her either."

"I never said that," George protested.

"I know you," Dream said. "I can feel it."

He shrugged again, "I'm not meddling in your love life, Dream. My opinion on your girlfriend doesn't matter."

Dream shifted and readjusted Ashlyn against him. His fingers softly pulled up to sift through the tiny tangles of her feathery brown hair. George briefly wondered if he had that much hair as a baby, he'd have to ask his mother at some point.

"Your opinion matters to me," Dream said finally. "And it's usually correct. You and my mom have that thing."

"What thing?"

"The tell about people." He looked down and made easy eye contact. "I always hope for the best but you and her see people for who they are."

"Like you," George said lowly. "A cocky self-centered idiot."

The smile was a godsend as it split over Dream's lips. Light and playful, he rolled his eyes. Summer and sun and clear skies.

"You are-"

"I want ice cream." George blurted, then felt his face heat. "Well-"

Dream raised a brow, "it's December."

"It's twenty-six degrees outside!"

"No, it's not it's..." the silence was a silly pause. "You're in America stop using Celsius!"

"It's still fucking hot."

They fell into another fit of laughter waking Ashlyn up in the aftermath. She whined and rubbed at her eyes tiredly.

"No, Dada. Night, night."

George softened, "you want ice cream?"

Her eyes shot up despite the languid need to close. The soft nod against Dream's chest was enough to warm George from the inside out. He kissed her forehead.

As he sat up George looked expectantly down at Dream, "she'll probably fall asleep in the car."

"You really want ice cream that bad?"

Dream pulled up and suddenly George realized how close they were. The warmth of Dream's breath was against his cheek and the only thing between them was Ashlyn. He sighed seeing the same eyes his baby flashed at him every other day.

As a bout of weakness, George looked to Dream's lips and remember the taste of rocky road and strawberry mixing into one. The burn of the sun on his cheek, the cold cup between his fingers, the ease of the radio in the background.

George swallowed and pulled away, "yeah. Ice cream sounds really good."

Chapter End Notes

I have written like all of this and forgot to post it on A03. It's gets updated on wattpad first.

Thank you for reading. I'm hoping to have the band AU by the end of March or early April.

Electric Love

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Drown me. You make my heart beat like the rain."

Electric Love

Børns

Dream spent Christmas Eve with Jade. George and Sarnap rolled their eyes immensely before letting him go. They set up The Polar Express on the living room flatscreen for Ashlyn and settled down to watch.

George had never seen Sarnap so excited to do children's things. Suddenly, the younger man became Ashlyn's best friend, as the first week of George's stay came to a close. Merry and bright with nothing white falling from the sky the three reigned in Christmas.

"Karl wants to FaceTime," Sarnap announced. "He knows you're here."

George frowned, "you told him?"

Sarnap silenced his phone and shifted Ashlyn around on his lap. She was content to stare, with very few thoughts running through her mind, at the movie before them. The younger man mulled over his words with a slackened jaw before canting his neck to the side.

George hadn't come around to talk to Karl, nor Quackity... yet. The last few texts were still left untouched from years before. Sad little blips in time and space that George refused to disturb. It was the fear of their judgment that kept him at a distance. What would they say? What would they think? His gut churned trying to predict the entirety of every outcome.

"I told him you were here," Sarnap shrugged. "Because Quackity is spending Christmas with him they usually call... I didn't tell em about Ashlyn though."

George remained a silent body rested on the plush cushions of the armchair. Deep in darkened thoughts, only the jingle of Christmas bells from the tv brought him back to his body.

"They will love her," Sarnap tried. "I do! It's..."

"Quackity hates kids," George reminded. The two had spoken about the subject in length when he visited years ago. Drunk over pints from the pub, the walk home consisted of hashing out the future. And for Quackity any form of child was a no-go. Abandon ship.

"Karl doesn't."

He looked away and mutter his real fear, "they won't want to talk to me."

Sarnap huffed, clearly fed up with this conversation, "can I call them or not?"

The choice wasn't really his because the second the next incoming call came through, Sarnap answered it. Ashlyn looked down at the phone with a mild expression. Those subtle brows of hers scrunched along with the bridge of her nose. It was the look she gave new people she met. George knew she would either hide from them or talk excessively.

"Sapnap! My love!"

"Karl! Snuck'ems!"

"God shut up lovebirds!"

They were so familiar. Even now after all the time. It was as if he'd joined a discord call with them, he listened to their banter and remembered late nights. George hid a nervous frown behind a palm and stayed out of camera shot. This was better if Sapnap laid out his easy-going foundation before dropping the George bomb on them.

"Why do you have a child," Quackity snorted. "Did you kidnap someone again?"

"Hey!" Sapnap chuckled, "it was one time and that was my cousin!"

"Yeah, yeah. What-"

"She's cute!" Karl's distinct tone came through the speakers. "Who's baby is that?"

Sapnap looked up at George and raised his brows. They were expectant. He shook his head in response. Sapnap tried again with pursed lips. George refused once more.

"George," he muttered, impatient. "Come on."

"George!" Karl called still yet to see him, "where have you been man! We missed you."

He heard the somber tone of Quackity come in a moment later, "he's fucking with us, Karl. George isn't there."

He felt the guilt immediately. Like a drop of a thousand tons, George's shoulders tensed. The brunette used to talk with Quackity almost every day since they'd become friends, so he could only imagine what it felt like to get dropped as he had. To have him simply stop answering. It was enough for George to get up and plop down next to Sapnap. The couch unceremoniously creaked beneath his sudden movements while his heart matched its painful groan.

"Hey," he managed. Blood was beating in his ears.

The silence was defending and Ashlyn always knew how to make it worse.

"Dada!" She reached for him with a pout, George reluctantly pulled her from Sapnap's lap. Soft in a fluffy jumpsuit, Ashlyn hugged him immediately and George settled back into his bones once more.

The phone was held steady before the three of them. Just enough for each to fit into the tiny camera box above Quackity's memorable beanie. They both looked the same. Karl and his older style button-ups and Quackity's expensive casual. But George could only look for so long before their dumbfounded expressions became too much. Ashlyn pulled his attention down before he had to look away.

"Hey, man." Karl cleared his throat, "Merry Christmas."

George nodded and muttered the same.

Quackity scoffed, "well *fuck* you too, asshole! Why haven't... where...what the fuck...George?" Silence, and Karl's elbow, hushed his hostile tone, "Merry Christmas?"

"Bad words, dada."

"I know, Ashlyn." George sighed deeply.

"So..." Karl drawled. "Someone want to fill us in because we're confused."

George nudged Sapnap who started terribly, "George is an idiot."

"I am not!"

"Shut up," he smiled. "You need to be quiet and remember the safe sex talk."

"Sapnap," he reprimanded holding Ashlyn's ears.

"What! If you want me to explain it this is how I'm going to explain it!"

"Whatever."

"Do you want me to explain it or not dumbass?"

"Not if you say it like that!"

Karl's smile seemed to become more worried as their bickering continued. Shifting into a chair they moved the camera. Quackity chose to stare daggers into George's soul once they settled in.

"So" Karl waved a hand, "you have a child?"

He shrugged, "Yeah."

"Why?" Quackity sounded horrified.

George rolled his eyes and let Sapnap cut in, "because he's an idiot!"

"You and Dream brought me to the party!"

"We didn't tell you to do it without a condom-"

"Sapnap!"

"I'm right!"

"Woah!" Karl's laugh severed the heated argument. "So you are telling us that when you visited you... and now? How old is she?"

"Two," Sapnap and George said at the same time. George glared at his friend and smacked him on the back of the head. He relaxed into giggles jolting the phone.

"That's why you stopped talking to me?" Quackity's voice was calm, a façade for how hurt he actually was. "You didn't want to tell me?"

"Look," George tried. "Quackity I..."

"He didn't tell anyone," Sapnap explained. "Not even Dream."

Both men on the screen raised brows at that, George despised them almost as much as he missed them. Their damn need to meddle in his relationships and friendships. It was the same and he briefly wondered if it would ever change. This still felt like the inklings of closure wandering into

his heart. Easy as a song it played soft through phone speakers.

"Dream!" Ashlyn clapped, "dada like Dream."

George wiped a tired hand over his face, "Ashlyn say hi to Karl. And Quackity."

"Quack," she giggled. "Quack quack."

Karl held a hand over his heart, "I'm offended."

"She likes ducks," George reasoned. "It's her favorite bath toy."

"Bath ducks!"

"So, you stopped talking to me because you had a baby?" Quackity didn't seem to have that wrapped around his brain yet. "George, why?"

He chewed his bottom lip, "you don't like kids. We talked about it. I... I know you wouldn't have taken this well and-" he looked down and fixed Ashlyn's tiny bow. "I'm sorry."

"You thought..." George despised the look Quackity was giving him. Soft and malleable enough to tug on his heartstrings. "It's *you*, George. It's different. I don't like airport kids or the ones that rub their noses on my jacket. Not her... she's...it's not the same."

"Right." George didn't feel convinced.

Sapnap huffed, "I told you. George, you're such a-"

"Shut up, Sapnap." Ashlyn leaned back and rested against her father's chest seeming to almost be ready for bed. The movie was coming to an end in the background as well. Santa was already on the screen handing the main character a bell.

"Well," the younger man said after a tense silence. "You guys coming for new years?"

George's brows kissed his hairline. It was news to him, this new years party. Apparently, it was a big affair. Drinks, weed, friends, and definitely not something Ashlyn could be brought to. It was the same every year, George just hadn't been around to experience it.

"Are you guys still having the party?" Karl seemed to look earnestly at Ashlyn dozing off.

"Oh," Sapnap snapped into reality then looked at George. "I don't know. I'll have to ask Dream."

"We might just have to do a small gathering if there is a baby involved," Quackity said. George's stomach sunk. This is exactly what he didn't want to happen all those years ago, their compromise. He didn't want to take away from their fun because of *him*.

"It's fine guys," George reassured. "I can always go somewhere else. You should have your party."

"Without you?" Karl looked heartbroken. George hated that expression, it made him feel like a villain.

He sighed and stood with his sleepy baby, "you've done it for two years, one more shouldn't be a big deal."

"George," Sapnap tried but he was already walking towards the bedroom.

As he passed the front foyer, his timing seemed to be ironic. The locks clicked and a moment later Dream sauntered in, he looked... self-satisfied. George knew that expression all too well. It was seared into the back of his brain where all his wishful thinking formed. Filled with memories and unavailable almost.

Caught like a deer in headlights, Dream looked at him. George managed a smile, "goodnight, Dream."

"You're going to sleep?" Dream's voice sounded hoarse and gravely in George's ears. "It's barely ten."

"Yeah," it was barely above a whisper. His chin gestured back to Sapnap, "he's talking to Quackity and Karl if you wanna say hi. Think they want to discuss new years."

"Oh." Both brows creased, worried.

"It's not a big deal by the way." Ashlyn pulled on his neck and George looked down, "me and Ash can find something else to do that weekend."

Dream turned his head to the living room and George couldn't help but burn at the sight of his collar. He never put those there, Dream never let him leave marks back when they were... together? She must've had a great time doing it, painting him in purple and mulberry. George hated to admit it but they made Dream look even more desirable. Colored like an already exquisite painting. He walked around like a daydream and George knew exactly how it felt to hold on to the fantasy while in bed. Sweet and careful, he forced his eyes away.

Dream caught the lingering stare and covered his neck subconsciously. "Um... no. It's just a dumb party. We don't have to have it."

"Have the party," George said. "I'm not taking the fun away."

"Hey, it's really..."

"Night night," Ashlyn whined. Blinking open those pretty eyes, she looked at Dream and waved. "Night night, Dream."

"Little Ashy Ash," Dream's entire demeanor flipped. He immediately came up to kiss her forehead and smooth over her hair. "You going night-night?"

She nodded and held out a hand, "dada, Dream come night night too?"

"No baby," George said trying not to feel ill from the Dior perfume on Dream's clothes. It covered the aroma of summer and replaced it with bitter musky fruit. "Dream can't-"

"I can help you put her to sleep if you want." His offer was timid and touchy. Almost as if Dream was trying not to break a boundary. "Only if you want. Maybe we can talk after."

"Dream," Ashlyn clasped her hand a few times. "Night night."

George couldn't keep his baby from her only bedtime wish, "okay."

While George got Ashlyn ready for bed Dream took a shower. He hoped the younger man would come back smelling like himself rather than Jade. George wanted warmth and reassurance, he wanted Dream. His best friend from years before, that dripped with palm and sweet. Dealing with lingering marks and blissed-out attitude was fine, George just wanted the smell of his best friend

back. It was a small comfort George tried not to become attached to. But it seems that ship sailed long ago.

Ashlyn blinked at him with sleepy eyes as George changed her clothes. A pastel purple onesie, one his mother bought, was her favorite. The front had a tiny monarch butterfly next to a cute little sun. George wondered if that's where his mother got miss sunshine from.

"Dada," Ashlyn whined. "Hugies."

"Hugies," he sighed pulling her to his chest.

Lying down on the mattress he held Ashlyn close and watched Dream walk in a moment later. His smile was simple. Attractive and familiar in the dim light of the bedroom, he sighed. George eyed his wet hair and flushed shower cheeks with grave envy. For Jade, for Dream, for all of it.

"Dream's back," George hummed to Ashlyn.

Dream didn't hesitate to climb onto the bed and crawl up to meet them. The mattress groaned and settled as he laid facing George, Ashlyn warmly tucked between them. She uncurled from George's chest to reach for Dream. He let her clasp a small hand around his finger. George huffed.

"Just so lovable, huh?" Dream smiled in response. "Even babies love you."

"Like father like daughter." The comment made George bristle. Because if that wasn't true he didn't know what was, although admitting it would take him out. He settled down to watch Dream look easily upon Ashlyn like she was a new revelation.

"You wish."

The silence was comfortable. George banished every terrible thought he had about this domestic interaction and chose to stay present. Here where things were real.

Without thinking, he reached over and dug two fingers into the freshly washed strands of Dream's hair. Dirty blond and heated from the shower, it was soft between George's nimble hand. He thought the other would pull away, tell him off, but he let his eyes slip closed beneath the touch. The exhale felt heavy enough to break them both.

Those fingers wandered and wandered. Over his cheek, his naturally arched brow, his velvet-soft ear. Wander and memorize until they stopped on the contusions littering his neck. Dream tensed. George sighed. He wanted and wanted and wanted but decided not to say a word. He moved his hand back up.

"George?" That voice was soft enough to tug him further into the deep end.

George hummed and asked, "does she make you happy?"

Dream looked stumped, "what?"

"Jade," her name felt like a deadening poison. "Does she... make you happy?"

"Oh," he shrugged. "Yeah, I guess so."

Good, George thought. That's all he wanted in the long run. That's all he'd ever allow himself to want from the other man, his happiness.

With a genuine upturn of his lips, George dragged his hand up and moved to pull away. Dream

latched on to his fingers immediately, brushing them against his lips.

"I don't want to have a big New Years' party." A kiss to George's palm, "I haven't wanted to party since you left."

Ashlyn shifted and gripped Dream's t-shirt. George let Dream place one last kiss on his hand before letting it rub over Ashlyn's shoulder. She was short for her age, five inches below average. Nonetheless, she fit perfectly between them, tucked in with even breaths. Sandwiched safely with care, Ashlyn had fallen deep into sleep.

"I don't want to take away from all of it." George whispered, "it's why I stayed away in the first place."

"Sapnap always wants to party. He's Sapnap," Dream's smile was carefully depicted in the dim light of the bedroom. "And if he really wants to party he can go to Punz. I know he's having a get-together."

"Jade won't be upset?" George tried, "if you don't have a new year's party?"

Dream rolled his eyes, "she's going on a cruise that week. Told me a few hours ago. Think it was a ploy to get me away from here."

His hand dragged over Ashlyn's back soothing circles into even breaths, "you didn't want to go?"

Dream looked up. Those green eyes looked hazel and dulled in the light but George still felt special. So special and seen with the attention on him. If he could have someone look at him this way forever he wouldn't complain.

With no doubt in his words, he said, "I'd rather be here with you." Dream looked down and brushed over Ashlyn's cheek, "with her."

"Thought you didn't like kids."

"I never said I didn't *like* them," Dream corrected with a smile. "Just said I didn't want any of my own."

George huffed, "Ashlyn grows on people." They shared a gentle smile, "I love her. So much."

"You know," there was a lift to his voice, "it's odd hearing you say that now. You used to basically choke over those words."

George huffed, "because you begged for them all the time."

"Did not!"

"You did." The finality in George's voice made Dream shift with protest. Ashlyn gripped tighter on Dream's shirt and pushed her head back against George's neck. He took the liberty to kiss her hair. "You were always so starved for attention."

"Only *your* attention."

George was glad the room was too dark to see his cheeks redden, "you're an idiot."

The silence came to pass against the open-ended conversation. Both content to let Ashlyn sleep, they laid dormant. Only the timid squeak of the ceiling fan and faint inklings of Sapnap's laughter reigned in Christmas day for the two of them.

"I'm going to have to sleep here," Dream asked at some point, "aren't I?"

With a look at Ashlyn, George nodded, "unless you wait an hour or so. She shouldn't wake up once she's been sleeping a while."

Dream hummed and reached over to caress George's cheek, "And what about you. Are you going to sleep?"

"I can't," he teased. "I'm waiting for Santa to show up."

"You're twenty-five," he deadpanned.

George snorted.

Chapter End Notes

This book is a lot of fluff with no real plot direction tbh.

Thanks for reading <3

Best Years

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"You've got a million reasons to hesitate."

Best Years

5 Seconds of Summer

New years eve was an absolute disaster that George couldn't fix unless he fled back to his country.

It started off with the shock of meeting Quackity and Karl again. Ashamed of his previous actions he let his friends coddle Ashlyn while they prepared for the small party. She'd cried three tantrums since waking up and George was out of depth. He guesses she was feeling homesick because honestly, George wanted to go home as well.

Walking on eggshells around Dream was easier said than done. There were just things that resurfaced as George lived in the house he once visited. It amazed him how many habits had been formed in those small two weeks. How many were starting to form now hidden right under his nose. Dream helping put Ashlyn to sleep, Sapnap cooking breakfast with her, taking naps. God if anything that's what he missed most since keeping Ashlyn, his sleep. And here he received an abundance of it.

The domestic things were easy, although he knew, in the long run, they wouldn't be, they still were. Tension wasn't. Dream seemed to grow more and more comfortable the less his girlfriend showed her face. He touched closer and closer to breaking the line of platonic. Whispering light-hearted in his ear, kissing his palms, his cheeks, George was on edge. His lips were bitten until bruised and Ashlyn became more and more irritable as George repressed his anxiety.

In the corner of the living room, George watched the ongoings of this small party. It was family-friendly, explaining the reasoning behind several random children dashing in and out of Dream's house. They were his cousins or possibly some of Sapnap's as his family had come in to visit. Ashlyn didn't like any of the other kids.

George couldn't blame her the others were the typical kids you find at the park or the mall play place. The ones Quackity didn't like. To prove his point one of the little girls ran past them ripping the head off of her American Girl doll. Ashlyn scrunched her nose and turned to look at George. He couldn't help but laugh at her, she was so smart and witty for her age. With a kiss on her cheek, he knew she was going to be such a problem as a teenager.

Quackity, seeming to have finally escaped a long conversation with one of Dream's family members when he plopped down unapologetically with a beer. After digging in his pocket he handed Ashlyn a tiny Dumdum which she took gratefully mumbling her thanks.

"She hasn't eaten dinner yet," George sighed.

"You sound like a parent," Quackity quipped. Defiantly he opened the wrapper and let Ashlyn grab the stick. Weary, she looked back at George who just nodded, quickly she stuffed the sweet between her front teeth. "Plus its one sucker."

George changed the subject. "Thought you weren't drinking until later at Punz's party."

Snorting around the rim of his beer, Quackity replied, "I'm pregaming because families make me

anxious, so do kids. And they are a dime a dozen here."

"Tell me about it," George admitted he never really saw himself with a kid, and talking about now wasn't going to change much. So on the couch with Quackity he relinquished a bit of control. "You would have loved Ashlyn's spit-up days as much as I did."

"Ugh," Quackity grimaced, "don't tell me."

"What, you don't want to hear about how much throw-up I cleaned in the wee hours of the morning?" Quackity drank to that and George only laughed.

"You're insane."

"Quack tee." Ashlyn cambered out of George's lap and made for the other man. "Up. Up."

"Oh, um.." he spread his arms and shot a panic look to George. "I'm not really..."

"Up, up," Ashlyn said it so aggressively Quackity abandoned his beer to George and pulled Ashlyn up. Her familiar smile took up both cheeks while she reached forward. Those tiny hands smoothed over Quackity's cheekbones and didn't waste a moment before shooting straight to his hair. The beanie remained intact despite Ashlyn's sweet assault. "Quack tee! Dada, Quack tee!"

"Yes, baby," George said lifting the beer bottle to his lips. "Quackity."

"Fuck you!" Quackity said reaching for his stolen drink. "You're not supposed to- what about Ashlyn!"

"It's one beer," He waved it off. "Besides she's in good hands, right?"

"George!" Quackity seemed to hold Ashlyn a bit firmer now, looking at her as if she'd break. George reminisced on the days he felt that way. Back when Ashlyn was a newborn with tiny breaths and nearly always shut eyes. He held her so carefully for those first few months, like an expensive glass figurine. Now, George occasionally held her upside down just to hear her little laugh.

"She'll tell you if she wants to get down." The beer was disgusting but as it went down George's headache started to lessen adding a hazy film to the world.

Quackity looked back at Ashlyn and made a face. She mirrored the look before she started questioning him, "friend with Saps?"

He smiled, "Sapnap. Yeah, friends with Sapnap. And Karl. And George-"

"Dada."

"Yeah," he looked back to his friend. "That's still weird."

"Mm," George finished the beer and placed it before them on the coffee table.

"Friend with Dream?"

Quackity nodded, "yeah. And you. Were friends."

"Quack." She replied pulling his beanie off with no remorse. Sitting stunned he watched her place it over her own head. And in the process, she hid the New Years eve bow George had wrestled into her miniature ponytail hours before. He was honestly this close to just giving up on them

altogether.

"No, no," Quackity shook his head. "You can't take that! No no."

"Yes," Ashlyn said back. "Yes, yes. Mine."

George watched one of his best friends and daughter turn their civil conversation into a full-on whining war. Quackity would protest but Ashlyn would protest louder.

Instead of interfering, he let himself sink into the couch a little deeper. The tension in his shoulders was seeping out with the slow buzz of alcohol in his bloodstream. It was nice, he wouldn't get trashed as he'd done with Wilbur, but this little indulgence was enough.

"Hey," Dream leaned over the back of the couch a few minutes later. George wanted to groan but chose not to cause a scene. "You okay?"

"M'fine," he replied.

George couldn't exactly hear Dream's hum he could more or less feel it. Reverberated through the couch cushions, he felt the shake of summer lifting through his thoughts. White teeth and pristine sandy beaches. It was the same acrid taste of beer on his tongue then as it was now. A cheap bottle with priceless memories, he wanted to drown in the memories.

"You want another drink?" Dream's fingers found a stray hair and smoothed it down. The touch tingled just the edge of George's forehead.

"Probably shouldn't," he shrugged. Quackity was now far too involved with a game of Patty Cake to hear what they were talking about. "It was Quackity's anyway."

Dream raised a brow and pulled away a minute later. George didn't really understand the abrupt escape, he figured a family member called him away or something like that. Dream seemed to be unpredictably predictable. Because a second later he returned with two drinks and an escape for Quackity who was losing Patty Cake with mild frustration.

"Dream!" Ashlyn pulled her attention away to Dream's smily expression. "Up, up."

"Thank god," Quackity said taking a drink and handing the kid over. "I'm going to go find Sapnap."

Dream effortless pulled Ashlyn up and handed George a beer. He envied him again. It took George at least a year to figure out how to handle a child while doing other things. Dream seemed to be able to multitask without much strain.

"He's in his room talking to Karl." George tried not to feel tense when Dream replaced Quackity's spot on the couch. With the other man it was friendly closeness with Dream it felt like Damnation. He scooted a little away just for Dream to lean against him casually.

"Alright!" Quackity retreated around several people leaving George alone in the living room with Dream and Ashlyn. He sighed and took a sip of his beer.

"She didn't want to go play with the others?" Dream's voice was particular, gentle.

George discreetly rolled his eyes, "no. She'd rather sit quietly with us then run rampant."

"So, elegant and well behaved huh," he said to Ashlyn. She stuck her tongue out and chewed on the

lollipop Quackity gave her.

"Elegant," George snorted and sipped on his alcohol. "Don't know which parent she got that from."

Dream contemplated something for a moment, "her birth mother... she never wanted to see her?"

George needed to be far more inebriated to have that conversation with Dream of all people. "No. She didn't want to be a mom. Never part of her plan for the future or whatever."

"Neither did you, you didn't want to be a dad," Dream countered.

With a careful sip, he said, "I knew I could give her a better life than in an adoption agency." He shrugged, "couldn't think about *my child being alone with possibly hateful people.*"

Pulling the sleeve of his hood, George wiped Ashlyn's sugar sticky cheek until she swiped at him. Tucking away close to Dream for protection, he gave up and continued his drink.

"She's too sweet for that."

Dream seemed to silently agree when he looked down and kissed her forehead.

"Dream," she smiled. "Sky works."

"Sky works?" He repeated.

"Boom boom. Sky works."

Dream looked to George who waved him off, "fireworks."

"Does she like them or is she scared of them." Ashlyn crossed her arms and sat back to look at Dream and her father. Close and comfortable on the couch, George wondered what Ashlyn thought of them. He wondered, In theory, if they were together if she'd accept it. If she'd love Dream as much as George forever would. But these were the thoughts that kept George from sleeping, the ones that kept him away for so long. Because wishing and imagining never really came to be, this wasn't real and it never would be.

"Both," George muttered. He was feeling the buzz beneath his skin now. Alcohol had finally tainted his sobriety and was loosening all the tension. With a languid tongue and wandering thoughts, he set down the rest of his drink. Maybe a little too aggressively.

"What, don't want to get drunk?" It was a tease but George took it literally.

"Last time I drank, I drunk called you and asked you if you loved me," his chuckle felt more like a scoff. "Not doing that again."

"You know I love you," Dream smiled.

George looked at him. Under the warm light of the living room, Dream felt like a lover described in poems. Someone to worship and wax on about within lines of beautiful writing. The golden travesty they'd explain with fine-tuned words and harmonious grammar. George wasn't a poet, or a songwriter, he was a man enraptured with nothing but himself to tell about it.

He looked away, "not... not like that, you know that."

Dream seemed to let out a tired breath and George's guilt started to simmer again. He was putting Dream in a difficult spot by saying this, it wasn't fair. Dream was with Jade and no matter how

much alcohol and pity George endured it wasn't changing.

"Sorry," he laughed humorlessly pushing himself off the couch. "I'm an ass for saying that... for bringing it up." He sighed, "Come on Ashlyn, we need to feed you."

He reached for his baby while she promptly asked for macaroni. George corrected her and said mashed potatoes instead, she didn't fuss about it.

"It's okay, you know," Dream started before George cut him off.

"No, really It's not." He left it there and made his way to the kitchen. The party would be over soon, as the evening fell he knew he could avoid Dream for the rest of the night if he really tried.

Ashlyn fell asleep on George's chest when the fireworks started. Sitting out on the porch he held her close and reigned in the new year. The party petered out a few hours before this. Once dinner was served the families went their separate ways and so did Sapnap, Karl, and Quackity. Dream stayed behind for some odd reason. An off-handed comment about needing to clean up or whatever.

The door creaked open somewhere between eleven and twelve and revealed a somber-looking Dream. George knew that expression was his doing since it hadn't made its debut until after their conversation.

"Happy new year, Dream." George smiled, "you still gonna text me this year?"

He listened to the soft breath of laughter, "fuck you."

Hiding a smile in Ashlyn's hair, George muttered, "I enjoyed the little texts. You always added a little smile or a little heart after them."

Dream rested his temple on the door frame like a love interest in a book. Something a cheesy main character would describe as lustrous or some bullshit George would never admit to understanding. Trouble-free and relaxed, his friend kept both eyes on the dark sky instead of falling.

"Not New Years yet," Dream corrected defiantly. "Still got thirty minutes."

"Guess I gotta put her down then." George stood swiftly from the wooden porch and made his way to pass Dream. Who, with gentle fingers, tucked Ashlyn's hair behind her ear. George's gaze rested on him while Dream's remained enraptured with Ashlyn's peaceful expression.

"Come back?" A quiet plead within the small pops of celebration. Dream said, "You need to see the sky at midnight. It's... cool."

"Sure." He said helpless to this. Helpless to Dream and all things he did. He felt he would forever be this way, toeing the line of heartbreak and love until death do they part. He wondered briefly if this is how Juliet perceived Romeo. Forbidden devotion.

Ashlyn stayed asleep when George laid her down. Tucked like a princess in the large bed, he surrounded her with a pillow barrier. It was to keep her safe even if the bed was a queen size and she moved barely an inch during the night. The moonlight broke through the room to leave a sweet nightlight for Ashlyn if she were to wake up. George sighed and left a sweet kiss on her forehead

before going back to Dream.

He left the door open in case she started crying. They were only a little ways down the hall and George had somehow developed parental hearing. The sound of a pin dropping could easily alert him now, he blamed it on Ashlyn's first few baby months.

Returning to the porch George found Dream leaned back on his palms with both legs dangling off the edge. There was a very hesitant pause at the door before he moved forward. They'd been odd since George let his tongue slip a few hours earlier. Carefully walking eggshells around the other due to his own alarming emotions. The beers hadn't lasted much past an hour but he felt a buzz beneath his skin when siding up next to Dream. The wood creaked in announcement of his presence while he rested his chin on a propped-up knee.

"I like the red and green ones," Dream said after a long-distance firework popped.

George calmly said, "they go too fast for me to really see the colors. So, I'll take your word for it."

It felt like a jump in time to be here. Something kin to those warm June nights filled with laughter and slow inebriation. It was a small lip of happiness. Because despite all the bullshit, George was in Florida again. Sitting with his best friend on New Year's Eve, it was a revelation honestly.

"You're smiling," Dream stated.

He grinned a little wider, "I am."

"About what?" Dream's expression matched his own while a stray hand-pulled on George's fingers.

"Being here." He rested his cheek on his knee to look directly at the other man. "In Florida again."

"The sunshine state at its finest," Dream mused. "I'm happy you're here."

"Me too," he whispered into the warm air between them. Back in England, it must feel like frost but here George was ready for summer nights.

Dream hooked his fingers through George's own and brought them up to his eyes to inspect. It was like he was memorizing something. Something the older man knew was only for the moment. He figured Dream would inevitably forget the way their fingers intertwined beneath hazy firework skies. They'd be replaced by her pretty smile or the way Dream must trace her flawless cheekbones.

Either way, George would remember this. He would have the memory engraved with Dream under the florescent shadows of newborn lights and another year set between them. Bursts of colors George desperately wished his eyes could comprehend, if only to look at Dream like this. To see if his eyes mirrored the color of the small celebratory explosions or if his hair was as golden and dewy as all the fans spectated. He wished he could see every goddamn color and reattach them to an attribute of Dream, but maybe the universe was generous with giving him a minor disability. Because if he could, there would be no color that didn't remind him of Dream.

"This is so much better than last year." Dream's voice ghosted over George's conscious mind and brought forth skin bumps.

"Last year?"

A somber smile tugged at the corner of his lips, "might have blacked out a bit. Stupid decisions and

shit."

"Dream," George sounded daunted. "You drank. No, you blacked got blackout drunk?"

"Mm," he nodded. "Felt sorry for myself. Sappnap went off on me for god knows what and the house was filled with people. Just overwhelmed I guess."

George huffed and looked down at the ant crawling between a large crack in the porch. "You still sent me a text at midnight."

Dream didn't answer the statement, he more or less seemed to keep that grim expression. One that George knew was the reminiscence of bad decisions played on a loop.

"If it makes you feel better... Ashlyn was one," George continued to fill the silence. A little laughter at his past sorrow, "the fireworks terrified her, so every time one went off a little too close she'd start crying. Went on all night, every night, for three days."

Dream nodded, "fuck."

"Was a great start to the year."

Dream seemed to contemplate something before looking up to meet George's eyes. They were close, merely a few inches from each other. If he pushed over a bit, the older man would feel his thigh press warmly against Dream's. Let his sweatpants meet the seams of Dream's party jeans. The yearning for touch was so strong, George feared he'd give in.

The delicate touch to his cheek that swiped down his jawline was only making matters worse.

"I thought it was me," he whispered. "Thought I was the one to drive you away. That maybe what we did... somehow pushed you too far." George sank lower and lower with hushed confession. "Hated myself for you, ya know. Knew you were too nice to tell me I fucked this up. Then you didn't text back or call... I'm just, I'm glad you're here George."

His eyebrows pulled tightly together, "It could never be you, Dream." That would forever remain the same and George felt deeply severed by the truth behind it. "You were... perfect. Just like I'd imagined. A dream if you will."

That pulled a bashful smile forward, "God, I loved you so much, the second you showed up in the airport."

Loved, it was a reminder of the present. His throat burned almost as much as his heart. George would take it, if loved in the past was all he'd receive, it was quite a great honor. To be loved by Dream, it sounded pretty if said in retrospect.

"You're an idiot." He checked his phone on the deck and read out the number. "One minute. Make a wish."

"You aren't supposed to make a wish," Dream corrected. "It's meant to me a kiss."

In a deadpanned tone, "then you better hurry along. Jade's on a cruise, you might need to teleport to get to her."

Dream rolled his eyes then chewed on his lip for a moment, "guess this year will be shit too, huh?"

George shrugged.

The silence was head between them and maybe George had finally lost it. All those spit-up nights and terrible twos finally broke the last lip of George's humanity. Because the hand acted on its own, turning Dream's attention towards him. When he remembered it later he was going to kiss the other's cheek. Plant a nice friendly hello on the other for a year ahead but Dream had his own plans.

It happened too fast for George to understand, nothing until Dream's lips pressed against his own. George ripped away and hovered utterly shocked.

"Dream...?" He only came in for another kiss. This one felt lovely and warm and if the loud booming of fireworks didn't explain it nothing would. George melted against him the pulled away pained. Dream tried for another and he hand to break the barrier with his fingers. Two pressed against Dream's tender skin, he finally let the lump in his throat turn the knobs of tears.

"We can't." It sounded like shattering glass and wilting roses, "you can't do that to her."

"She does it to me," Dream tried. "I've known for a while now."

George grimaced and pressed their foreheads together, "not with me, Dream. I can't... I won't let you use me to get back at her. Not when I'm so... not when you know I won't fight against you."

"George," Dream said his voice so delicately it sounded like a poem. "...you're finally here. I just... please?"

After a severely loud explosion, George heard Ashlyn cry out. Her voice was desperate and horrified to wake alone with loud cracks. George heard her cry his parental name.

"I'm sorry," he made to pull away before Dream kissed his forehead.

"I'm sorry too," he said. "I didn't mean to..."

"I know."

George left Dream alone to watch the fireworks.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so sorry I haven't updated this sooner. I will update daily until you guys are caught up with the wattpad gaggle of people. <3

You Are The Reason

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"I'd climb every mountain, swim every ocean, just to be with you, and fix what I broke."

You Are The Reason

Calum Scott

"Are you trying to drown me you lunatic!" The water splashed over George's hair as he came up gasping for air. Dream's arms circled his waist like a man holding his beloved. Both saltwater covered imprints wrapped delicately on sun warmed skin and pulled elation into the other's heart.

"No," he whispered pulling George in close. "I'm trying to kiss you."

"Not in front of Sappnap," George let his lover close breathing in the same air. The world was hazy away from Dream himself. Unreal and made up, a memory far and faded. It was the man himself George remembered. The hair that grew sun kissed the longer they stayed between the ocean waves. Each freckle that earned a friend as the star beat down on them.

Dream kissed him soundly, "he's sleeping in the sand."

"What a dumbass," George replied with another caress.

It was memories like these that kept George in a constant state of agony during his Florida trip. Little snippets that hauled themselves out of the depths to remind him of almost. He couldn't step foot on a beach without dipping back into the past. Now spread on a blanket over the grains of Miami sand he tried not to look at the ocean.

"Ash," George reprimanded. "Stop moving I have to put sunscreen on you."

"No!"

"Baby, You don't want a sunburn."

"No!"

"Stop it, and let me put this on you," he all but hissed. They'd been at it for five minutes. She pouted and George knew the alligator tears were coming in. The patience George learned with having a child was thrown out of the window then, he let Ashlyn cry simply finished covering her chest and cheeks. It was better to listen to it now than days later when she would inevitable be in pain.

"Dada, mean!" She wailed the words in his direction. He slathered her chunky arms and ignored her protests. "Mean Dada!"

He deflated because it was true after all. George's anger wasn't supposed to go to his daughter. It was towards Dream. Towards Jade. Not to Jade who couldn't understand all of his problems. He pulled her up apolitically, "I'm sorry."

Ashlyn sniffled, "no be mean, dada."

"I know, baby. I'm sorry." It wouldn't fix it, but he kissed her several times to make up for his curt

demands. Sapnap sat down with them a moment later with a raised brow. "Look, how about you and Sapnap make a little sand castle?"

"Yeah," Sapnap said tugging on a baggy of sand toys. "Come on Ashlyn, let's give Dada a break."

"Be careful," George reminded. "Stay where I can see you."

"Alright dad," Sapnap all but mocked and held a hand out for Ashlyn to take.

The tears from before were nonexistent as she trotted along side Sapnap happy as a clam. George rolled his eyes and swiped a bit of sweat from his forehead. It was hot in Florida, almost like summer.

Every few seconds George caught Ashlyn bending down and picking up a rock or shell just to hand it upwards. Sapnap was overly excited with every small treasure and would crack a smile, letting her put it in the toy bucket.

George didn't exactly like the beach-scratch that- he didn't like the memories at the beach. They were far to good to remember when he was now sat alone watching. Jade, sadly, was back from her cruise a week after New Years. And with the passing holiday, George roughly had a few weeks left to spend in the US. A few weeks... then he vowed he'd never return.

Dream acted like a stranger after their kiss and Sapnap seemed to catch onto the weird atmosphere. It was like walking around in quicksand and being pulled surprised it pulled you under. It wasn't like he hadn't tried to clear the air, it was more of Dream wouldn't speak normally to him. Sapnap was even more distant then before, it felt like a lose-lose situation.

And because of this, George planned to leave a month early, he simply couldn't do this much longer. He couldn't pretend like he hadn't ever fallen in love with Dream, like he didn't make a life altering mistake those years ago, he couldn't pretend he was the same person two years ago. It was eating him alive.

George's phone, rested on top of the cooler, buzzed before he answered the call, "mother?"

"Honey!" She shrieked into the phone and George pulled the device from his ear until she quieted down. "How is Miss sunshine?"

George glanced up and found Ashlyn laughing with Sapnap. Her two pigtails shook back and forth while he poured sea water into a tiny moat for their castle. He sighed, "she's having fun."

"Oh no," his mother complained. "You have the face again don't you?"

While scoffing George dug his fingers into the sun warmed sand. He drew small shapes, "what face?"

"The upset one I don't like." She seemed to let the pause linger, "is it Dream?"

"No, mother." That was a lie but George really couldn't talk about it right then. He traced a heart and split it down the middle.

"What he do?"

George shrugged, "nothing. I met his girlfriend... she doesn't really like me. But other than that everything is okay."

"Right?" His mother did not sound convinced. "Why doesn't she like you?"

George changed the subject, "think I'm gonna come home early. Miss being there and all that, the routine."

"You hate routine," his mother countered. He could hear voices in the back of the call, a slight hint of tropical music. George could picture his parents relaxed in a hotel lobby or whatever they chose to do on the island they resided on. Large drinks with little umbrellas, it was a happy thought in the hurricane of darkness. "Is it really that bad, honey?"

George broke a bit, "yeah. It's like... it's like living in a life I should've had but it's all completely wrong."

"George, you shouldn't look at it in that light."

"I know."

His mother sighed, "so not like you thought?"

"No." It was the biggest let down othe century. Being there hadn't lifted his low spirits it only sunk and solodified them. "How's dad?" George tried once more to change the subject, "how's the trip?"

He could hear the reluctance within his mother's voice but she continued on without missing a beat. George could only half listen to her because Jade's high pitch laugh interrupted his focus.

In the ocean wave's she pulled up from the water and wiped it vigorously from her eyes. Seething and annoyed. Dream stood a foot away smiling like an idiot because he must've dunked her. He leaned forward to pull Jade's waist close and whisper in her ear. George hoped she felt special beneath Dream's gaze. Because when Dream looked at him it stopped time. It stopped and started his heart. Beneath those eyes George felt important thing in the world. She laughed again. George forced himself to look away.

George left the call with his mother lighter than before, yet heavier at the same time. Ashlyn was having fun with Sapnap while he watched closely at what she was doing. Every once in awhile he would adjust her sun hat and pour a little water on her arms. George was grateful Sapnap cared so much for her, because he figured she wouldn't have had much fun with just George. Not while he moped and felt the eroded pieces of rock between his fingers. Drawing shapes like a sad character and a rainy window. All because Dream gave him a kiss.

Plane tickets were a fun little past time on his phone. Shielded from the sun by the canopy they'd brought, George sifted through sand and clicked past several airlines. It was desolate at the moment, each rating higher than when he planned to arrive. He sighed. Maybe it was the parental trait in him but the second he heard a child screeching George looked up.

Out of the corner of his eye a baby came hurtling towards him chased by a small dog. Jumping up, George took several quick steps and swooped the child up from the ground just before the dog reached him. The dog wasn't being cruel he was simply wanting to play but the child seemed terrified. Gripping George light a lifeline, he tried to crawl highee.

"No," George told the dog who was well trained and sat on command. It wagged it's tail and let a slobbery tongue hang over its teeth. Turning to the child George cooed in a calming manner. "Hey, it's alright. It's just a puppy. Just a pup pup?"

The baby was about the same age as Ashlyn. Thick with baby fat he weighed a bit more. He had pinched features and a cute little swim shirt and swim trunks to match.

He sniffled at George, "pup pup. Scary pup pup."

"I know," George agreed. "But he's nice. See." Bending down George let the dog smell the child and lick the arm he stuck out. The baby physically relaxed. "See nice puppy."

"Axel!" His gaze shot up across the beach, George found a woman running and holding her oversized sunhat. After seeing George she slowed down to a walk and stoped calling the name. He figured the baby in his arms was Axel and made to meet her halfway.

She took him immediately, "my word you run fast. Rex was playing Ax. He's not scary, he loves you."

"Momma, no," the child tried. "Scary."

She sighed and looked to George, "thank you. I'm so sorry about that."

A nervous hand scratched at his neck, "no worries. I know all about the kid taking off thing." He glanced at Ashlyn talking with an animated expression to Sapnap. "She takes off and forgets where she is."

"Aww," the woman smiled. "She's yours? Very cute."

"Yeah, she's mine." George turned back to the rescued child, "yours?"

The woman huffed, "yes. Just me an him. His father isn't ya know present. Wasn't the type. Now my baby is raised by me and my friends, isn't that right Axel."

"Down! Momma I wanna get down."

This woman couldn't be much older then George he realized. Her hair was naturally red and braided into two french braids over her one piece swimsuit. The large sunflower was now visible up close on her hat. It made a shadow when she bent down to set axel on the sand. The baby took off with the dog in another direction. She smiled at George a moment later, flashing a set of pretty teeth at him. He couldn't help but smile back.

"It's nice to me you... uh.."

"Ophelia!" She answered gladly, "my parents really liked Shakespeare. What could you expect from writers. And you are?"

He liked how bright this woman's voice was, how open and honest. He tried to follow suit when he answered, "I'm George, it's nice to meet you."

"I take it you're not from here." Ophelia's smile was warm when she crossed her arms. They both watched Axel take off towards Sapnap and Ashlyn on the sand between them. Sapnap not only had another child to entertain but a dog who practically tackled him as well.

"What gave it away," George smirked. Ophelia huffed a small airy laugh. "No, I'm just here to visit my friends for the holidays."

Ophelia hummed, "has to be some pretty great friends to come to Florida of all places."

George glanced at Sapnap rolling in the sand just to entertain the two babies and decided yes. All of it was worth it to see him, if not Dream as well. And to mention it, Karl and Quackity were pulling up in their car as George finished up his conversation.

"They really are," he assured.

"Is her mother here?" Ophelia asked carefully.

George waved her off and said, "we have the same situation. She wasn't equipped to be a mother."

She let out a surprised breath before a mischievous grin sank into the apples of her cheeks, "so, you're telling me you're single."

To say the least George was surprised. Shocked enough to look towards Ophelia with a dumbfounded expression. She was confident in herself as well as her presence, it was awful, but something about her reminded him of Dream. Maybe the accent or the personality, he couldn't put a finger on it.

"Well," he removed his tongue dryly from the roof of his mouth, "not in so many words but I am."

She smiled again, "can I have your number."

Well, he couldn't say no to that could he?

With a self satisfied grin George watched Ophelia pick up Axel and walk back to the gaggle of girls they'd escaped from. He hadn't thought about dating since Ashlyn was born, but this could be a start. Something positive in the world of love and war. It was all looking up until Dream came sauntering back up the beach. Shirtless and dripping, George's frown was immediate.

They walked back to the canopy together and let the silence sit heavily between them. He went back to his plane tickets and Dream pulled a water bottle from the cooler. They didn't speak but both remained aware of the other's presence. That's how it had been since new years, odd. Cold. It chipped steadily away at George's sanity as well as his heart.

Dream was the one to break first, he casually asked, "did you know that girl?"

"No," George shrugged refraining from looking up. He knew he'd see something he liked, it was inevitable. And if he looked the memories of Dream's body would resurface and haunt him. The breeze pushed around George's hair and he could feel Dream watching him. "I saved her kid from being mauled by their dog."

Dream hid a grimace within a breath, "seemed like a very friendly conversation. What, did you get her number?"

It was supposed to be a joke, so George felt awfully smug when he said, "yes, actually. I did, her name's Ophelia. Seems very lovely."

"Oh." Was Dream's only response.

George let it lie and Dream seemed to shift uncomfortably. It was like he was trying to come up with what to say, what to do. Instead of talking he dipped down to look at what George was so infatuated with on his phone. A tiny drop of seawater dripped onto George's forearm and made him flinch. He hadn't realized how close Dream had gotten.

"Can I help you?" When he looked up he found Dream's expression sullen, almost empty. The sunshine that usually etched each of his features was abandoned for something hard. Unwelcoming compared to the usual excitement.

"You want to leave?"

George deflated and dragged a hand over his eyes, "look Dream it's not-"

"Not what, George?" His words were a liked an arrow to the heart but George guess he was the one to shoot first.

"I don't know," he admitted. "Don't think it's good for me to be here."

Dream scoffed, "and what does that mean?"

George clenched his jaw, "just think it's time for me to go. Let you guys go back to norml-"

"Normal?" Dream snapped, "right, sure. You gonna ghost us again as well?"

"No, Dream," he muttered. "I just think..."

"Think what?"

George was at a loss, "I just think it's becoming too much. Sapnap is always bothered by Ashlyn and I feel like I'm causing a riff between you and Jade. I just-"

"Spare me the sob story, George." He shook his head and picked up his towel quite aggressively. "Whatever, Leave if you so desperately want to, have a nice flight."

His expression hardened, "Fine."

Karl and Quackity interrupted and further argument wigh their arriving laughter.

Crying in front of Ashlyn was starting to become a common occurrence and George hated it. Ashlyn looked at him like he was her world and when he cried she tried her best to be good for him. He didn't want to look weak before her, because he was all she had in the long run. George didn't want Ashlyn to ever think he couldn't protect her or keep her held together.

With his suit case on the bed she handed him small items while he angrily put them back in their spot. Half folded and half shoved, one by one he was ready to leave and Ashlyn looked very confused.

"No cry, Dada."

"Sorry," he said although in vain. "You... you wanna go play with Sapnap?"

"Saps sleeping." He nodded and wiped his nose on his shirt. They were all exhausted from the beach so he wasn't surprised Sapnap was asleep. Most likely on the couch face down. "Why you cry, Dada?"

George he smiled softly at her then looked away, "Dream was being mean. But I'm alright Ash."

"Dream?" She tilted her head and pulled her bear from the bed. "Dream not mean. Dream's Bear bear. See?"

George huffed, "not to you baby. Mean to me. Mean to Dada." She still looked confused so he shrugged, "but it's okay, just means we can go home. Don't you wanna see grandma?"

"I no wanna go home," was her sweet little reply. George could only hold himself together for so long. "Wanna stay with Saps. With Dream."

George didn't answer that, he couldn't. Instead he moved around the socks in his suit case and pulled Ashlyn's from the ground. She watched him with mild interest as he put together their little life and stuffed them back into their confined travel bags. This would be inevitable whether it was now or in a few weeks, they would both leave and he'd be heartbroken. Things just seemed to progress a little faster than anticipated.

"Dream!" Ashlyn clapped from the bed. George ignored her and kept packing. "Dada, look Dream!"

"Go away, Dream," he whispered over his shoulder feeling the other's gaze from the door.

"I just want to talk..."

"Yeah," George sniffled. "I'm not in the mood."

"Dream made dada cry." Ashlyn said to the blond. She gave him her best angry face and George only felt the lump in his throat tightened.

Dream's tone was the softest George had ever witnessed, "George never cries."

"Dada cry a lot," Ashlyn added unhelpfully. George just scoffed and made to pick up Ashlyn's stray socks on the floor. She was such a snitch.

"George," Dream tried. "I'm sorry."

"Good for you," he whispered. "Now leave us alone."

"I was... out of line. I took it personally, because... fuck George, I get you back and then suddenly you want to leave again."

"Got me back," he scoffed moving at a slower calculated pace. "Got me back for what exactly? It's certainly not because you missed our friendship."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

George whirled around and stunted Dream with a glare, "what does that mean? God, I forgot how dense you are sometimes."

"George?"

"No, you don't want my friendship, Dream." He motioned blindly between them swimming in hazy tears, "you want what we used to be back. You want me to warm your bed and kiss you to get back at Jade! And I don't want that anymore, honestly, I never wanted it like that in the first place!"

"Dada," Ashlyn's lip quivered. "No yell."

He scoffed and glanced from her and back at Dream who beat him to the punch of next question, "what did you want then? Because I thought you just wanted it to be once cause it was always a joke...?"

"Loving you was never a joke to me!" George said wetly, "it might've been to you with how much you throw the words around but it never was to me. And then you didn't... you didn't want me, Dream. I knew that. It was like you had enough and... So at that damn party I," he glanced at Ashlyn and hushed his tone. Dream seemed to understand what he hadn't before. "What did you expect of me, Dream? To just come back and be the same person who visited two years ago?"

"No," he tried, "I don't..."

George aggressively wiped his eyes. Once the water works started they wouldn't stop easily, it was why he never let himself cry.

"I had to grow up, okay? I had to go home and flip my entire life around and be a parent." Dream reached a reluctant hand out and George pushed him away. "Do you know how hard it is being here? Having to see what I didn't get to have? What would have been my life if I didn't sleep with her mother at that party? It fucking sucks! Then you started acting weird because of that stupid New Year's kiss... what am I supposed to do, Dream? Act like everything is fine? If you wanna kiss me, break up with your god damn girlfriend first, don't make me a home fucking wrecker!"

Dream took in a measure breath while George panted his seething expression. He thought he was coming to him but after a second, Dream moved to Ashlyn who had started crying as well. Exhausted with a little sun burn, Ashlyn must feel so at a loss for a two year old. Listening to her father go off on a person who has only ever been kind to her. George felt like a fucking failure seeing Dream pull Ashlyn up and hold her close. He was comforting the meltdown George had caused.

With a shaky breath, he plopped down on the edge of the bed and placed his head in both hands, "I'm a disaster and a horrible parent. Fuck."

"Shh." George couldn't tell if Dream was talking to him or Ashlyn. "You're alright, your Dada isn't mad at you."

George bit his cheek, "I'm sorry, Ashlyn. I'm sorry..."

Dream came to crouch in George's eyesight. The older man refused to look up, far too ashamed of his word vomit and actions. He needed to go, get back on a plane and run to his home town, let Dream... the warmth of fingers on his chin interrupted his panicked escape plan.

"George? Look at me." He shook his head with warm embarrassment, "my love, please."

That shocked him a bit, because that endearment was no longer belonged to him. If anything it was Jade's property now. Yet Dream used it like he'd never said it to anyone other than him before.

George reluctantly met Dream's eyes. The same green Ashlyn stared at him with, held his gaze. Gentle from his lighter brows to the midst of a full frown, Dream looked at him. It felt like George was stripped bare before him. Harbored in time by a look. All of his feelings were laid out on a silver platter, it was too much.

"I'm sorry," Dream said. "For that summer, I treated you like a one night stand when you were my best friend."

"Don't apologize for that I..." George scoffed trying to look away, because he felt like a mess.

"But I am sorry, George." It was so sickeningly sincere. Dream brushed two fingers over his cheek, "I was an idiot two years ago, yeah? Wanted to party and fuck around and that hurt you're feelings." George shrugged. "I grew up too you know. You left and I had to deal with that. With the unanswered 'why'."

"Dream," he mumbled with nauseating guilt.

"George," he replied. A gentle smile, "we both messed up. And neither of us are okay with what happened."

"Why were you an ass at the beach?"

Dream sat Down on the carpet and readjusted Ashlyn's embrace. His expression was familiar to George, the older man just didn't believe it.

"You were jealous?"

Dream drew circles over Ashlyn's back, she'd stopped crying opting to sleep against Dream instead.

His answer was simple, "yes."

George thought knowing that would make him giddy again, instead it made the tears rise to the surface. Bubbling up in his eyelids the room was unclear again. He was a mess with Dream before him. The younger man only sighed and pulled George's wrist. He went willingly as the other man pulled him into a heap on the floor.

"It's not fair, Dream." George rested his chin over Dream's shoulder and made sure not to crush Ashlyn in the process. "You don't make this fair."

"I'm sorry," he replied holding them both a little closer. "Didn't mean for this to be so complicated."

"I shouldn't have," a sniffle interrupted his sentence, "at that part-"

"Don't finished that," Dream mumbled onto his cheek. "Don't say that because you wouldn't have Ashlyn. And I wouldn't get to have her either."

"I'm going anyway," he tried. "In a few weeks I'm going and..."

"It's not now," Dream promised. "A lot can happen during those days."

George exhaled and sunk into a warm embrace, because Dream was right.

Chapter End Notes

Well honestly this story is just really sad with a lot of hugging. I've have to dip into the archives of my sad playlist for these chapter songs lol

This ch. is very unedited.

Never Not

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"For as long as I live and as long as I love. I will never not think about you."

Never Not

Lauv

"Are you sure this is a good idea?"

Sapnap shuffled the ring light around the desk while George stood off to the side. He shifted from foot to foot with Ashlyn wrapped up in his arms. It was her nap time which, to Sapnap, meant the opportunity to stream. George wasn't so sure.

"Yeah, man!" The younger man haphazardly tossed an empty drink bottle behind the green screen. "The fans will love it. They've all missed you."

George caught Dream passing in the hallway and waved him down. He stopped to acknowledge them both then looked to Ashlyn.

"You want me to take her?"

The British man frowned, "you think this is a good idea?"

A nonchalant shrug, "sounds fun. The fans will love it."

"See!" Sapnap seemed so excited that Dream agreed with him on something.

The blond didn't seem phased. With soft steps, as if to not wake Ashlyn, Dream pulled the child from George's arms and smiled when she gripped onto his chest. She never let anyone other than George and his mother put her to sleep, he wondered what was so special about Dream then contradicted his own wonderment. It was Dream... he was always an exception.

"I don't want to pawn my parenting off on you-"

"Nah," Dream reassured. "Stream. I was just going to go watch a movie in my room anyway."

George searched each of Dream's symmetric features for doubt but only found fondness. A certain type of figment washed over his eyes when he held Ashlyn, something kin to the way he used to look at George after uttering his three little words. The same look that appeared from a quiet happiness, it was the same way George looked at her. Like she held the world and she would forever need protection. That was too much to unpack now, too much to ever unpack. He sighed and relented a bit.

"If she cries or asks for me you'll text us."

Dream nodded along.

"And if anything-"

"George," he said fondly impatient. It was airy and light and made George's heart stutter within his

ribcage. Dream reached forward and pushed the hair from George's eyebrows, "I'm going down the hall not leaving the country. She'll be fine."

He knew that, he said so as well.

Dream smiled triumphantly making way towards the hallway, "have a fun stream."

The door shut and he let his shoulders drop. Dream was a can of worms George didn't even know how to start opening. Where would he even start? Maybe with Jade and her constant silent complaints about George's visit? Maybe with that kiss or the soft way Dream called him 'my love' within his guest room walls? Or maybe they should call it a day and start from those late nights in June and hash it out from there.

They needed to do *something*. *Anything*. *Maybe...*

"God," Sapnap muttered, interrupting his thoughts. "Why are you two always on the sinking Titanic all the time?"

George blinked, "what?"

"Really?" He gave him that look, the one when George got it wrong and Sapnap tended to look at him like a dumbass. Those stern brows furrowed even deeper from behind the computer monitor. "You really that much of a dumbass?"

"Sapnap," a very long breath, "what the fuck are you on about now?"

"You look at him like he hung the moon for you." The words were said offhandedly, interrupted by small clicks of the mouse and a few typed keys. "When in reality he's a coward who can only keep a girlfriend when she cheats on him."

"Sapnap!"

He scoffed, "don't give me the stern George voice, we both know I'm right. Jade sucks."

Hastily, George found his phone and pocketed it. There were two chairs before the camera and he took his quite aggressively.

"Saying it and thinking it are two different things," hissed beneath his breath. "Not all of them should be said out loud."

Sapnap's bicep flexed as he hovered over the go-live button. It was a tense bit of anger George felt radiate off of him. The younger man took a seat and turned all of his attention to George conveying some kind of emotion. Hot under the spotlight and his friend's intense gaze, he shifted in his seat.

"Has he told you about the first year you were gone?"

George shook his head and looked away, "talking about it won't make anything better."

"Yeah," Sapnap mused. "But telling you might change your opinion on his actions."

"So what, Sapnap?"

"So you don't care?" George waved him off. "You don't want to hear how I had to listen to his damn sob story about your love affair?"

"Oh god. Love affair? What the hell did you tell you?"

Sapnap smirked and turned to fix the stream music, "ya know all the disgusting things I did not want to hear! Also why and in the hell did you let him-"

George clapped his palm over Sapnap's loud mouth before he could turn any deeper shade of red. Despite the subject, the room felt warm again. It'd been a long time since he'd gotten to talk shit with Sapnap for a few hours.

"Alright, so you know we had sex what's your point?"

He wrenched George's hand away like it was nothing, "what he described wasn't just sex! You weirdo, why the hell did you do that in the shower!"

"Sapnap," George groaned, thoroughly embarrassed now. "The point! Get to it!"

"No, actually, I have several grievances to talk about!" Sapnap waved a wild hand as he continued. "I was in the house when these things were happening, wasn't I?"

George snorted, "yeah."

His face pulled into an extremely sour expression, "you guys suck. And I'm revoking our friendship."

"Sure," George drawled, "just because we..."

"Did it on the kitchen counter!"

"What!" He shrieked, "that did not happen!"

His friend frowned, "no... but it could have. And I wouldn't have even known!"

"Did you want to know?!"

He considered this, then vigorously shook his head, "no, not really."

"Right are we starting the stream now?"

"Yeah, we... wait!" George groaned and sunk dramatically into his chair. "My second grievance is, why the fuck didn't you just text him back. I don't care about my texts but you left me with this big blond ball of feelings and it wasn't pleasant."

"It couldn't have been that bad," George chewed on his lip.

"Try again, buddy." He shot his friend a glare, "this lovesick man was so unbearable. All he would talk about was you. And I understood it for the first three months but after that, it was too much."

George felt the inkling of guilt sweep back into his bones, "yeah? I'm sorry."

"Nah," Sapnap cast off. "He cried it all out in my bed because he didn't want to sleep alone. Whatever the fuck that phase was I'm glad it's over." George stifled a laugh. "Oh! That brings me to another grievance!"

"Another one-"

"You owe me new bedsheets!" George raised a brow as Sapnap fumed off in the chair next to him. He was glad soundproof panels were lining the walls of his room so that this didn't reach Ashlyn and Dream. "That idiot stayed in here and made them smell like his weird cologne and filled them

with tears like a nark! No matter how many times I wash them, even with fucking bleach they don't-"

While Sapnap yelled, George realized he didn't want to be anywhere else. Sapnap was so real before him, unlike all the times he'd imagined having another conversation with this man. All those nights he missed just needing someone to insult with back and forth. It all came crashing in on George at once. Like a weight lifting from his shoulders and finding home warm on his chest, he interrupted the other man's tangent.

George never was one for physical affection but he had his moments. This was one of those rare gems. Easily he pulled Sapnap's tensely animated shoulder's forward into a snug little embrace. He felt the muscle beneath his nimble hands and decided to squeeze a little bit tighter, wrapping both arms around the other's neck as a friendly affection. The younger man physically paused, utterly shocked under George's hold... but he regrouped and returned it with full force. A squeeze tighter around his friend's back.

"I'm sorry," George said, firmly. "And I hear all of your stupid grievances."

He scoffed, although it felt awfully fond, "they aren't stupid, they are valid."

George smiled a quiet smile to himself, "fine, I'll tell you the next time I fuck our best friend while you're in the house. Better?"

Sapnap wretched out of the embrace, "don't you fucking dare!"

George's laughter was uncontrollable now, loud and real he shook and sunk deeper into his seat. Sapnap's disgusted eyebrows caught the giggle and soon they were both laughing at absolutely nothing but each other. Something kin to those hours spent together two years ago.

He sucked in a tight breath eventually, "and I'll buy you new sheets."

"Good," Sapnap smiled.

"But! I'm letting Ashlyn pick them out. So, don't come crying when you have butterflies and rainbows to sleep on."

"You wouldn't dare," Sapnap gasped.

"Start the stream, idiot."

By the end of the stream, George and Sapnap were trending on Twitter. Thousands and thousands of fans started off their theories as well as their speculation on the old friendship renewed. George had never felt so light, he was on top of the world when he left Sapnap's bedroom. Practically bouncing on his toes, he left the other man to come down from the high-strung stream and crept towards Dream's ajar door.

When he peeked through George practically melted. The tv was on but on the lowest volume setting allowing, presumably, Ashlyn to sleep. But within the two-hour time frame, Dream had fallen asleep alongside her. Laid upon his pillows Ashlyn rested tucked close to his chest holding Dream's hoodie string between her chunky fingers. A blanket covered her legs and waist but fell exposed around her back where Dream had laid a pillow to keep her from rolling. And as a further measure, his hand lightly rested over Ashlyn's shoulder blades.

They breathed in tandem, slow and calm beneath the setting sun. It shone crimson pastel's through the blinds of Dream's window and left a kiss of lines over the both of them. George's smile buffed out to a quiet lift. He couldn't resist pulling out his phone and holding the moment captive within his camera roll. This would be another photo to add to his list of almost when he headed back to England. Something for George to keep close to his heart, something to be the inevitable glue to hold everything together years later. His two great loves sleeping in his memory.

It was past time for Ashlyn to wake up but he just wanted to observe for a moment more. Sat on the edge of, Dream's bed he leaned against the latter's turned side. It didn't wake him, it actually settled something even further into the younger man's bones. A ghost of a completed affection, George the unknowing key.

Like Dream had done to him many times before, he reached out and tucked a stray hair behind the other's ear. George always loved this version of Dream, if there was one version to love more than the other, this soft and unguarded drop of defense was his pick. He could almost count the freckles littering Dream's cheek when he slept. Most of the time George only received glimpses of his still features. He was always moving, always a million miles away.

"Dream," he whispered into the comfortable silence. "Dream, it's time to wake up." There was no response, so he changed tactics. "Clay... wake up."

That did the trick, Dream's expression scrunched while he huffed. George could only smile down like an idiot and continue the soft brush of fingers through sandy blond hair.

"Did you just call me Clay?"

"Yeah," he sighed, mourning his forgetful brain of that lovely rasp of his sleeping voice. "It's time to wake up."

He grumbled, "five more minutes."

An airy laugh, "Ashlyn needs to wake up or she won't sleep tonight. And this will probably ruin your sleep schedule as well."

Dream raised a hand to meet George's in his hair. Linking their fingers he tugged George against him and rested his arm over the dip of his waist. He pleaded, "five more minutes."

George hesitated here. This was a sleep-deprived decision on Dream's end, but George was fully awake. He knew this would only hurt later, that cuddling then having it ripped from him would ruin another part of his soul, but fuck him he'd let Dream taint him black if it meant feeling like this. Even if it was for five more minutes.

"Okay." George rested up against Dream's back and felt their bodies fit like Tetris pieces. The younger man relaxed even further beneath George's hold humming content and satisfied. George was trying to banish his dopy smile but it was impossible, as a compromise he pressed it against Dream's neck and breathed him in. Summer and love and regret and pretty green eyes, he held it all close.

"Good stream?" Dream asked a few moments later.

"Yeah," he admitted. "Haven't laughed that much in a long time."

"I'm glad." Dream trailed his fingers over George's grip on his waist. "Ashlyn fell asleep really easily. Just talked to her and then she was out."

"What'd you talk about?"

Dream hesitated for a moment then said, "things about you. Told her about how we met and why we were friends. Then she was out like a light."

"You're so cheesy," George let his lips brush over Dream's neck while he talked. "Did she say anything back?"

"Just that she loves her Dada." He smiled and leaned back a little, "and me. Said she loved me too."

Of course she did, George knew it'd come soon. She was already telling him the exact same thing when they had bath time.

"We need to wake her up," he informed regretfully. "She'll be fussy about it as well."

Dream shrugged and brushed two fingers over Ashlyn's cheek and said her name. George didn't let go of his hold around Dream. He let him wake her up and be the bad guy.

"No," she whined. "Sleep Dada."

"Ashlyn," Dream chuckled. "It's Dream. But Dada said wake up."

She peeked one eye open and tucked her face up into Dream's neck as a protest. This child loved her sleep and George could only roll his eyes.

"Tell Dada no," Ashlyn tried. Dream looked over his shoulder and George shook his head.

"I can't do that," Dream explained. "Cause then he'll be mad at me."

She shook her head, "Dada loves Dream."

George snorted and finally spoke up, "come on Ash. Up up, you want macaroni?"

"Roni?" He nodded and she finally sat up. "Roni."

Dream smiled and pulled her shirt down so it no longer appeared sleep-ruffled. "God, she's just like you."

George let go of Dream and fell to rest flat on his back. She was so much like him it scared George at times. Like looking into a tiny mirror he saw himself a lot of the time. It was her looks that she took from her mother. The pretty eyes and the perfect lips, the rest was dominantly George. All down to the personality with a few unique attributes.

"It's a problem." George rested a hand over his eyes and felt Dream turn over.

He left Ashlyn behind him and grinned before she demanded attention again. When she realized Dream wasn't going to give it to her she decided to use him as a jungle gym. With a lot of effort, Ashlyn pulled herself up and over Dream's lean side and plopped down between them. George reached out blindly and patted her forehead just to hear her giggle.

"Roni!"

George looked at Dream from behind his hand and found him already looking, "do we have any macaroni left?"

Dream shook his head, "no, she ate the last of it a few days ago."

"Well, I know Sapnap needs to go to the store anyway." He shrugged moving his hand down to his chest, "maybe we can all go and make a trip out of it."

Dream nodded and started tickling Ashlyn before she reprimanded him.

"No, no!" She shook her head and caused it to stick up more. "Bad, Dream. Bad."

"She doesn't like being tickled," George huffed.

"I can tell." Dream pulled her up by her armpit and played as if he would bite her. She laughed and squished his face between both hands. "Argh, I'm gonna bite you."

George watched him play with Ashlyn and realized why Jade pushed the idea of kids so hard. Dream with a baby was so endearing to watch. He was soft and completely loved by Ashlyn. George still didn't like her, but he understood Jade's want now.

Soon the fun turned to George and the next thing he knew he was being attacked by two of his favorite people. Ashlyn sat on his chest while Dream suffocated his arm with his body.

"Ahh, you got me." He played along before Ashlyn was bored and started babbling nonsense.

Dream set his chin on George's shoulder and looked at him with a beautiful longing expression.

George met his gaze, "what?"

Leaning into the hand that raised to caress his cheek, Dream said, "nothing."

He wasn't so convinced, "what is it?"

"I just..." Dream kissed George's palm, "I love this. The three of us."

George couldn't contain his bashful smile, "yeah, I think Ashlyn is happy here."

"You know," Dream started reluctantly. "You could both... stay. Not just for the three months... but stay, stay. Move-in."

This was when the moment broke and George found reality again. He could stay, but it wouldn't be like this. George would stay and he'd deal with Dream's girlfriend. He would stay and ruin Sapnap's parties. He would stay and a thousand other things would come in to break up the pretty little fantasy they created between four of Dream's bedroom ways.

"No," George whispered. "We can't."

"...why not?"

George searched Dream's dilated eyes and chose to pull away. He couldn't let himself hope for any of this because it wouldn't end well. It would be two years all over again times one-hundred. Broken on his bedroom floor, George couldn't do that again.

"We can't," he insisted. "Not only because of the obstacles already here, but our visas would never be approved. It wasn't approved when I came the first time and I had a valid work reason to be here."

"Yeah," Dream sat up to mirror George's seriousness. "But maybe if..."

"No." Dream looked heartbroken and George felt bitter, "we can't stay. I won't ruin Sapnap's party years and I don't feel like fighting over you with Jade. So, let it go Dream."

"Jade doesn't..."

"Doesn't what?"

He looked away almost ashamed, "I'd pick you over Jade."

George chuckled humorlessly and pulled Ashlyn from the bed to let her stretch her legs, "real healthy relationship you got going there, Dream. Honestly, seems like true love."

He followed Ashlyn's bubbly steps to the door before Dream spoke again.

"The only time I believe in true love is when I'm with you."

George acted like that didn't shatter every piece of his being. He acted like he hadn't heard it.

"Come on Ashlyn, we're going to the store."

Chapter End Notes

I think this song is the theme for the entire book.

Thank you for reading have an amazing day or night

Youuu

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"She moves just like you. She tastes just like you. But it's always been you."

Youuu

COIN

Ashlyn gripped George's hand as the two of them exited the store bathroom. Stood a few feet away in the mix of the store's chaos was Dream and Sapnap. They'd snatched a shopping cart while they waited giving Dream something to lean over and look breath talking while doing. Sapnap, in his overly expensive hat, talked casually while looking at his phone. They both smiled when Ashlyn came running towards them dragging George along.

Sapnap managed to swoop her off her feet and twirl around, "did you go potty?"

"Yes," she laughed patting Sapnap to let her down.

"American bathrooms are terrifying." George huffed taking the opportunity to lean against Dream's secure shoulder.

Dream smiled in acknowledgment before getting straight to business, "alright, food first and then whatever else-"

"Actually," Sapnap tried, "can I take her to the toy section? The pack of cards I want is over there."

"Toys!"

George frowned, "can I trust you to not let her out of your sight?"

"Yeah," he said sincerely. "I've got her, George."

The older man nodded left kisses on Ashlyn's cheek a few times before letting the two trouble makers take off towards the other side of the store. He was trying to be more lenient, give his friends the benefit of the doubt. It wasn't always easy. Letting Ashlyn out of his sight was the hardest part of parenting, but he'd have to grow used to it.

Dream sensed his immediate regret and pulled his elbow towards the frozen food section to not let him dwell on the separation. The cart made squeaky shrieks as they tread over the old tile of the general store.

"She'll be fine," Dream reassured.

"Yeah, I just get..." he waved a hand.

"Overprotective?" George nodded. "It's understandable. She's your baby. You'll probably always be overprotective."

Dream turned down an aisle filled with surgery cereal and George huffed. It wasn't only the size of these boxes that amazed him but the amount of pure sugar within one bite. His teeth ached thinking about it. Ashlyn would absolutely love it.

"She's not really a baby anymore." Dream handed him a box and he haphazardly tossed it into the basket. That received a small glare, but George was too caught up in his own thoughts to care.

"Ugh, she's only a few years away from starting school. Gone are the days where she couldn't talk or slept seventeen hours a day."

"I don't know how you did that and continued to stream like there was nothing wrong."

This made him grin mischievously, "I'm a good fucking actor."

Dream rolled his eyes, "Sure you are."

"I mean, you didn't know." A new box of cereal was tossed into the basket before Dream moved them to a new aisle. "And you over analysis everything I do."

Dream abruptly stopped leaving George to walk a few extra steps before noticing. He observed his friend then, latching on to the heat rising on the other's cheeks. It was a pretty shade of pink over his forever sun-kissed skin tone, oh the pros of Floridian weather. A small laugh escaped him while Dream glared daggers.

"I don't."

"You do," George countered. "It's why you're such a good friend. You always just know."

He stuck his fingers through the spaces of metal and pulled Dream's cart along. They'd come for a reason and George knew they'd never finish this trip if Dream paused every few seconds to over-analysis everything George said. He'd been doing that quite a lot lately. Most times Dream remained quiet rather than jumping into a conversation head first. George wondered what he was thinking so hard about. Selfishly, he hoped it had to do with him, but in reality, it was probably about Jade. He saw Dream texting her before they left the house, always frowning at his phone like a dumbass. George tried not to think about her because it only ended in self-pity when he did.

"I'm not a good friend." Dream said quietly. George's hand stuttered in the air before continuing to drop the cups and boxes of macaroni into the basket. A sigh, "I'm not a good boyfriend either."

"And why is that?" George mused. He kept his eyes elsewhere while asking this. He believed if he glanced directly at Dream he would get his own trivial emotions involved. They used to talk like this before that summer, they used to be supportive friends, George was trying his best to be that again. Even if it stung like an everlasting prick of a bee listening to Dream entertain a new lover.

Dream shrugged and followed along to the cold doors of yogurt, "my head is always an ocean away. Stuck in the past, just never get attached I guess. And she's constantly upset about something."

"Well," George swallowed thickly. "Maybe start with why you like her. Go back to why you wanted to date in the first place."

Dream was silent for a long minute, apparently thinking. George let him have his quiet air and scrolled through the shared shopping list on his phone. They still needed vegetables, milk, Sapnap's Koolaid packets, and ice cream. It was only the first half of the list. About midway down the spices isle Dream found his train of thought.

"She was sweet when we met. I liked the way she made me feel about myself. Was just a fun person in general."

"Yeah," George forced out. "Did you ever go on like dates? Or did..."

"Well, we started as a hookup... but then at some point we got coffee, I think."

George gave him a look, "you think? So you don't even know?"

"I do! We did!" George's laugh was airy and quiet, completely and utterly fabricated. "I don't know, is the date thing supposed to go on more than like five times or?"

He shook his head and tossed Sapnap's requested steak seasoning into the basket. Why he needed it, George didn't have an answer. The man didn't even cook Dream and George did.

"Tell me you're a fuck boy without telling me you're a fuck boy."

"Hey!"

"Look," George tried. "Maybe you should take her out on another date or something. Talk to her maybe? If she's always upset you could just ask her why, I've learned girls will tell you if you just *ask*."

Dream let out a really loud groan. And George knew helping was hopeless. You can't make a man care, George learned that the hard way. Especially with Dream, he sympathized with Jade's frustration. The godawful summer segments where he felt a bit worthless in his presence were a steady reminder of the careless behavior. He grimaced at the thought of his idiocy and embarrassment. George hopelessly pined after a man who wasn't ready nor would give him the time of the day. At least Dream liked Ashlyn, it was a plus on her side.

"What would you know about girls," Dream teased. "Have you talked to any recently?"

George huffed and discarded Dream's diffusion of attention. Instead of playing into his trap, he pulled the cart along to the bread aisle. Looking to Dream, George waited for the other man to pick whatever brand he desired but had no luck. His friend only waited patiently for an answer to his question.

"I know about girls."

"Says the man who has a baby because he didn't practice safe sex."

"Then don't ask my opinion on it." It came out a bit too curt and Dream noticed. All features soured beneath the bright yellowish store lights, George shrugged. "Go bitch about it to Sapnap."

It was hard being supportive when George was desperate for any kind of affection and hadn't found it. The only kind he received was on borrowed time and sympathy. Dating was a shit show he didn't have time for. Plus, George decided adding someone else to Ashlyn's equation would somehow ruin everything. He started this alone and it seemed he finish it all in the same.

"Oh, come on. Don't be so uptight," Dream said finding the correct bread. "It was just a joke. God, when was the last time you blew off steam."

George blinked, "what?"

His friend eyed him seriously, "when was the last time you had sex, George?"

He thought about that party and the acrid aroma of beer spilling out of his cup. Bodies against bodies and barely any room to breath. He thought about Dream pressing a beautiful girl up against a wall instead of him. Kissing her like she was the world because apparently he never was. Shitty party lights and stupid pop music to fill the void of sound. George could almost remember the taste

of her vanilla lipstick and telling him to do it anyway. To do it with hazards and lies. Pleading and tugging him closer. He was too inebriated to care then, too hurt to think straight. It ached and burned and... well George hadn't thought about sex since. Getting off was a chore he rid himself of in the shower alone if absolutely necessary.

"Two years ago at an influencer party my friends dragged me to," he muttered walking down the aisle. Dream remained still for a moment then followed him quietly towards the baby food section.

"You haven't..."

"No," George said. "I haven't exactly had the time nor the desire to do anything but keep Ashlyn safe and happy."

"Oh."

Oh, was right. George just shrugged and silently handed his phone to Dream to look at the list. This was incredibly domestic now that he thought about it. Shopping together like an old married couple, it was bittersweet to imagine. He couldn't picture being married to Dream, or rather he couldn't picture *Dream* married to anyone. The man was like the wind, always moving always everywhere at once. And despite the way he was so particular about things, he tended to get distracted by the simplicity of several aspects of life. It was like trying to cage a dog, it never usually ended well.

"Do you think you'll ever..."

George glared at him, "why are you so interested in *my* love life when you can barely handle your own?"

With defensive brows, he said, "fuck off. It's not just your love life, it's you. I want you to be happy."

George waved him off and slipped a packet of Oreos into the basket. There were small pleasures George indulged in that weren't sex, and cookies were one of them.

"All I need are these and Ashlyn, the rest can fuck off."

"Wow," Dream scoffed playfully. "I feel so loved."

George made to reply with a witty retort before someone called out his name. Well a little more than his name.

"You're Georgenotfound," a group of teenagers approached them. "Why aren't you in England?"

"Um..."

Dream held back a wheezy laugh and said, "we kidnapped him."

They looked dumbstruck at the two of them before several questions were thrown their way. Why are you here? Where have you been? We thought you guys hated each other! Can we take a picture? George was happy to answer most of their questions before he caught Sapnap's familiar hoodie out of the corner of his eye. Ashlyn was clapping in his arms, then they stopped abruptly spotting the congregation.

George smiled for a picture and made eye contact with Sapnap from afar. He curtly shook his head and the other man looked down at Ashlyn before it clicked. No one knew about Ashlyn and

George hoped it'd stay that way.

One of the teenagers saw him before he disappeared down the aisle and George was an inch away from panic. Dream was a lifesaver.

"Hey," he said pulling their attention. "If you guys give me your Twitter I'll make a tweet about you."

George was grateful that smoothed over the riff. The kids seemed to forget everything else as they speed off towards the exit giggling and boasting.

Dream placed a hand on George's elbow and whispered in his ear, "it's okay. They didn't see her."

He melted a bit, "I just... I've kept her away from the cameras because it'd be too much right now. I don't want her to *have* to grow up in the spotlight."

"That's fine," Dream reassured. "It's a good decision. People on the internet are crazy most of the time."

"It's not only for her," George admitted pulling them forward. "I don't think I'm ready to answer the inevitable questions about her. Who's her mother and why-"

"Hey," pulling his fingers gently, Dream held his hand. "You don't have to explain. I get it."

"See," George managed a smile. "Always just know, don't you?"

"You're easy to read."

"And you are not." Dream looked at him like he was dense. He understood the expression. Dream was the most open person he knew, a little too honest at times, but it didn't make him any easier to understand. Or maybe George really was dense, and lovesick, and heartbroken, and longing for...

"What do you call Jade?"

His brows pinched at the abrupt questioning, "what? Jade?"

George released Dream's fingers, "Jade. What do you call her? Like an endearment."

"Oh," he swallowed and looked away. "Uh Babe, baby. Stuff like that."

He hummed and continued on as if he hadn't asked. Dream made a few confused sounds but followed George's quest to find Sappnap.

"Is she your love?" It came out very casually but the thought had been eating at George's heart for days now.

"My love?" Dream was so confused it appeared endearing. "What are you asking me?"

George flushed a bit with humiliation and changed the subject, "never mind. Look I see Ashlyn and Sappnap."

Sappnap saw them from the other end of the aisle and whispered something to Ashlyn. Once her feet hit the ground she took off and George crouched down to welcome his baby.

"Dada," she said quite hastily. "Saps gave me pew pew."

"Pew pew?" He took the little item out of her hand and examined it. A tiny orange stick attached to

a cardboard backing read '*Cat Toy Lazar Pointer*'. "For patches?"

"Cat cat," she said throughly pronounced. "Saps broke the first one."

The man in question held up both hands in defense and George just laughed pulling Ashlyn up from the floor. She was either getting heavier or George was getting old, probably both.

"Well, we got all of the stuff," Dream announced. "You ready Sapnap?"

"Yeah," he flashed his little pack of cards. "I'm ready."

As they were walking to the register George realized something.

"You know I haven't seen patches since I've arrived."

"Cat cat," Ashlyn clapped. "Patch stays in Saps room, Dada."

"Does she?" He smiled, "what happened Dream, Patches abandoned you?"

"She doesn't like Jade," Sapnap snorted. "Hisses at her when she gets too close."

George laughed and found that rather fitting. Patches had taste at least. They proceeded to check out and Dream remained eerily quiet through the entire process. Thinking up a storm George wasn't equipped to brave. In the end, Ashlyn was babbling about macaroni so much even George was hungry for it. He let Sapnap click her into the car seat while he helped Dream easily load the trunk.

Dream stood still for a moment before saying, "I don't call her that you know."

"Hmm?" George was in a focused state of mind but Dream seemed to be stuck in the past conversation. He set a bag full of vegetables up against the car wall.

"Jade," he breathed out heavily. "I don't call her *that*."

George raised a brow, "call her what?"

Dream shut the trunk with the last bag and lifted a hand to George's chin. The caress was so natural it felt practiced but the brush over his bottom lip took him back. Years and hours, George was back to this same moment when Dream used to be his. In that year, his friend would have leaned forward and obliterated the space between them with his own gentle lips. Now Dream's eyes harbored the same look George reciprocated. Regret. Longing. Love. He wished Dream would pick him again, even if it was once. Even for a night.

"My love," Dream whispered. George's breath stuttered like a teenage fool. Stood in the parking lot of an American general store, George was willing to be the other person. Be the home wrecker. Willing to muse the idea for a brief bout of weakness. "I don't call her that."

"Why not," George dared to ask. A breath above a whisper he pleaded into the quiet night.

Dream's smile sped up his heart and ignited his hope, "because *you* are my love."

"You shouldn't say that to me," he tried seeing logic but Dream was so close, and... he closed his eyes.

"I know," he whispered kissing softly between George's eyebrows. "But it's true. My mind is always in the past, always thousands of miles across the ocean."

Everything clicked into place suddenly. The exchange in the store, the looks, the text messages, and George wasn't stable enough to handle it. Reluctantly he pulled away and managed a solemn smile.

"Seems like a tragic love story."

"Honestly," Dream recovered stuffing his hands into his pockets. George was happy they'd parked on the far end of the parking lot, because very few were witnesses to this exchange. "It's my favorite though."

"Idiot," George muttered pushing the cart away from the car.

"George?"

"Dream," he huffed. "Can we just..."

"No," he said flatly. "They took a picture of us."

George whirled around to see the same group of teenagers, all mouths dropped with shocked expressions. The only thing George cared about was Ashlyn and she was already out of camera shot but now, looking at Dream's paled face, he worried a little more.

"It can't have looked that bad," he reassured. "They used to see us do stuff like that in IRL streams, so it's fine."

"Yeah," Dream said after a minute. He shrugged, "I'll probably have to tell Jade it was on purpose, for the cameras."

He tried not to take that as a personal blow, but George's heart was on his sleeve, "yeah. See, no big deal."

"Come on, Sapnap's banging on the window."

George nodded and took one last look at the group before entering the car.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading

About Love

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"My head gets messy when I try to hide, the things I love about you in my mind."

About Love

Marina

George watched Dream rummage around his room frantically while sifting his fingers through Ashlyn's hair. The three of them decided to watch a movie in Dream's room before Jade texted him saying she was free. Dream was planning a date with her since their trip to the store so George wasn't surprised when he jumped at the chance to fulfill his ideas. Maybe a bit hurt watching him choose someone other than him but that was jealous and the emotion never looked good on him. It was exhausting and irrelevant to be bitter towards some form of happiness for Dream. George pushed it down well.

Dream wanted to fix what they had, which George couldn't exactly see anything they had in the first place. From Dream's earlier comments, George could infer that Jade had cheated or at least strayed before. He couldn't understand why Dream was still with her but he tried to be supportive. Maybe he'd never know the ins and outs of other's relationships due to all his failed attempts. George heard a couple he knew back in school got married after all of their adultery against one another. He briefly wondered if their situation turned out better in hope maybe Dream's would be.

"Shower," George muttered to his lost-looking friend. "And stop stressing."

"Shower," Dream repeated. "Yeah, you think I should..."

"Shower," George said again. Dream back and forth with eyes of a lunatic. That pretty hue was eating the world as a stress reliever. It was almost laughable but George was trying to keep quiet while Ashlyn slept against him. If he was lucky all he'd have to do was take her back to his room and lay her down for the night. "You have two hours till you have to pick her up."

"Two hours." Dream seemed to be far away from the situation, confused and contemplative.

"Right, shower. Are you guys okay? Is Ashlyn's going to be-"

George softened, "we're fine, Dream. Go take a shower I'll pick out your clothes if you want me to."

"Please." His shoulders dropped relieved before he headed straight into the en suite bathroom.

As the door closed George wondered if Dream was supposed to be this nervous. Quite frankly he was a wreck. He always imagined a little jittery or maybe excitement when going on a date. But no, Dream was full-blown eyebrow tensed stressed. He thought when you were with someone that they were supposed to make you feel safe, cared for, not frantic. Dream honestly looked scared to face Jade, but George wouldn't say anything about that.

In Dream's closet, he sifted through all the shirts that appeared colorless in his deficient eyes. Greens that looked like awful mustard and a lot of browns. He paused over a shirt he knew was blue and frowned. George bought the shirt years ago during his first stay and had given it to Dream as a momentum from England. It wasn't a big deal then but Dream treated it like gold and had kissed him gladly. Hard against his bedroom door like a lover leaving his beloved behind for war.

He could almost taste the desperation on his tongue pulling the hanger from the wrack. As a second option, he pulled a black button-up and nice jeans. They were going eat at some fancy restaurant then out for drinks, George figured this fit the occasion.

The mirror beside him reflected his disdainful expression. He hid that look from Dream when he spoke of Jade but with just himself and the mirror, he let it live. Let all his bitter thoughts come to life. Turned on himself he blamed too many personal appearance attributes as the reason for not being chosen once more when in reality it was his baby sleeping a foot away. Because even if Dream chose him over the perfect features of Jade, he still had Ashlyn. Ashlyn and responsibility. Ashlyn and parenting. It wasn't what Dream wanted no matter how much George wished it to be true. He sighed and looked away from the mirror.

After laying out an outfit on the bed, hot steam trickled out of the open bathroom door. George made a reckless little decision. Leaving Ashlyn tucked in Dream's bed, he snuck his way over and leaned onto the doorframe.

Dream caught a glimpse of him and flinched, immediately tightening his towel around his waist. George wasn't bothered because all he could admit was how much of a work of art Dream was. Chiseled in some parts and soft in others. Curved with tight biceps and firm shoulders. The outline of abs were there but Dream's inconsistent diet kept them from being obnoxious. George liked it that way, it showed the gentle side of his friend.

He laughed when Dream checked his towel was secure, "calm down. I've seen it before, a few times actually."

Watching Dream flush was so entertaining George laughed again, moving further into the heated bathroom. It was large for an en suite. The bathtub was separated from the shower, and if that didn't tell you enough it had two sinks. George took the liberty of hopping up on the counter and looking at Dream level in the eyes. The other man scoffed and reached for his shaving cream.

"So now your making jokes about our past... sexual encounters?"

"Sexual encounters," George mused humorously. "That's a fancy way of saying I begged you to rail me in your bedroom."

Dream couldn't get much redder for George worried he'd explode. He spread shaving cream over his cheeks and covered the rosy tint with foamy white. George poked his chest, and just to be a menace, poked right below his navel. It caused Dream to nick the edge of his jawline with the razor.

"You're in a mood."

George scoffed and hooked his ankle around Dream's waist to pull him forward. While he was flustered into confusion George snatched the shaving razor from him. Dream looked lost when he was pulled further between the older's legs. The expression only deepened as George brought the shaver back over his ex-lover's cheek.

"I'm not." The words were slowly articulated and dragged out while he shaved the small amount of stubble Dream had. George personally liked the bit of gruff on the other but when they were last together he'd caught Jade complaining about it.

Dream leaned his hands on both sides of George's legs when the latter rinsed off the utensil.

He shrugged and said, "Just think it's funny how we danced around each other for so long. Acted

like what we were doing didn't mean anything."

That stilled Dream immensely and George knew he made a mistake saying it. He dragged the shaver over the sharp edge of Dream's jawline and avoided eye contact. Holding the other's neck with his right hand he could feel Dream's elated pulse.

"Did it mean something?" The other whispered into the steamed bathroom. George felt his heart ache and his stomach churn, because yes it did... to him at least.

"Guess not," he huffed and tried to cover the truth. "I know you didn't- I wasn't... I know it wasn't a big deal to you."

Dream pulled his wrist to stop his ministrations, "but it was to you?"

George pushed him off and turned his cheek to shave the other side. This was not how he wanted to have this conversation. He wanted it years later when there was no way for George to ruin anything. Later when he came to visit and had a drink while they talked about who they used to be. When he could avoid the look Dream was giving him, but alas Dream never did anything George planned.

"Everything you do means something to me." The silence felt so loud that George rushed to fill it. "It's not a big deal, though. I'm not upset over it anymore."

"Anymore?"

He grimaced at his word choices, "I'm not upset over it. That's all that matters."

He caressed the other side of Dream's face and tilted his head up careful not to nick the underside of Dream's chin.

"But you were," Dream pushed.

He paused and finally met his friend's pretty eyes. A thumb brushed sweetly over his jaw as he said, "yes, Dream. I was upset. But it was two years ago and my ego couldn't comprehend why you didn't want me then. Now it makes sense because we were always just for show, a ship name." He presented a false smile and moved to shave the last bit of Dream's cheek, "a joke. Honestly, think you should be an actor because I..." George stopped himself from admitting it, from pouring his heart out like this. Doing it while helping Dream get ready for someone else, he was embarrassed for himself now.

It must look so terrible from the outside, like a homewrecker. He felt disgusted with himself and inched further back from Dream's touch. With one last swipe of the shaver, George pushed down his pride and finished Dream's face. With horrid embarrassment, he reached for a hand towel.

"Because you what?" His voice was hoarse and heavy with unspoken emotions.

George swallowed thickly, "I'm done. With your face." He cleaned up the rest of the shaving cream and let Dream look in the mirror. "You look lovely again."

Dream shifted his eyes from George to the mirror and the other took the opportunity to hop off the counter.

While Dream got dressed George pulled his sleeping baby up. The air between them was tense and heavy and George felt like a terrible person for giving Dream more to worry about. He was already neck-deep in stress he didn't need any of George's petty past feelings making it worse.

He was going to apologize but when he turned George felt his heart melt. Dream really was the most heartthrob man he'd ever met. Fixing his hair in the mirror George raked his gaze shamefully down the other's body. He'd chosen the blue shirt, and if that didn't rip him to pieces already, the jeans fit perfectly. All cleaned and pristine for Jade, he hoped she appreciated him as much as George did. Because he really was a gift to this world, George's at least.

He forced a smile and said, "you look great, Dream."

The other made eye contact with him in the mirror before quickly looking away. The expression was on the verge of anger and George knew he was the cause of it.

Dream said, "thanks."

Not wanting to prolong the ache or a new fight, George quickly made to leave the room before Dream abruptly stopped him. With a hand on his elbow, he waited for a telling-off. Something to say he went too far or that he was out of line a minute ago. He looked up expectantly and waited beneath that familiar green gaze. He couldn't read Dream so his next sentence caught him off guard.

"Really, George, thank you."

George brushed Dream's cleanly shaven cheek with the back of his hand and smiled again, "anything for you, Dream."

Dream sighed and kissed the top of George's head murmuring 'my love' as if it wasn't going to shatter him. He couldn't watch Dream leave, but listening to the front door shut was enough for him to curl up with Ashlyn in bed. George chose to go to sleep at eight rather than witness the rest. To see if Dream would come home or if he wouldn't or worse he'd bring her back with him.

Ashlyn was subconsciously happy to have him beside her because she stretched and held a vise grip onto George's shirt. He kissed her forehead.

Sat amongst the dinner table George cut Ashlyn pieces of steak and made them small enough for her to chew. Surprisingly, Sappnap knew how to cook one meal, which included mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, and steak. George wasn't complaining because the flavor was quite good and Sappnap seemed satisfied with all of it. Maybe a bit boastful of anything.

The two were chuckling about some game Sappnap kept losing at when the couple of the year took a seat. Dream sat next to Ashlyn and kissed her cheek while Jade shot glares and sat next to Sappnap. When walking back to the kitchen he made faces at George about her presence. George huffed a laugh and handed Ashlyn a tiny fork.

"So George, how long are you here for?" Jade's voice was bitter in his ears.

He glanced oddly at her and said, "I'm only here for a few months. We planned to leave in March."

She pursed her mulberry colored lips and sipped on the glass of wine Sappnap was kind enough to pour for her. A well-manicured hand waved at him, "her mother isn't worried about you two?"

Dream cut in, "it's just the two of them babe, I did tell you that."

Jade feigned forgetfulness, "I'm so sorry, I didn't-

"It's fine." George laughed off, "no one is waiting for us besides grandma. Isn't that right Ash?"

"Grandma," she nodded holding a green bean out for George. "I don't like bean, Dada."

Taking it from her he sighed and let someone else change the subject of the dinner. Tried was an understatement because Jade wasn't budging. She seemed to have an ulterior motive.

"So, no girlfriend, George?" The bite she took of her steak was pointed and aggressive. He glanced at Dream who hadn't looked up since sitting down.

"No..."

"Boyfriend perhaps?"

George involuntarily flushed, "I'm not really looking for a relationship right now."

"Why not?"

"Jade." Dream's voice was harsh enough to make George flinch. He never spoke like that to him, even when Dream was seriously angry. Jade didn't seem to be pressed about it she only challenged him with a pinched expression.

"It's just a question, Clay." Dream's real name sounded wrong coming out of her pretty mouth.

"Right George? No harm done."

Sapnap stayed in the kitchen and refused to come to George's rescue. Traitor.

"Sure."

"So, you're a streamer?" Jade said it as a statement, not a question, "does the internet know about little thing?"

"Well, no... I don't want her in the spotlight."

Dream's grip on his fork progressively got worse as Jade continued her interrogation. George felt awful for causing so much turmoil by just being present. It looked like Dream had finally fixed something in his fractured relationship and now George was ruining it again.

"Why not, she's so cute!"

"Jade," Dream was on an edge George was terrified to see him fall off of.

Jade shot a glare to her boyfriend, "is it wrong of me to want to know about your ex-" George looked up before she corrected herself. "Your old friend?"

Ah, so that's what this was. Jade didn't like him because she was jealous. George could've busted out into laughter right then and there. Explained how Dream would never pick him over her, how he would never be a threat. He wondered why she even felt so inclined to think that way. George wasn't anything compared to her, he scoffed and fed Ashlyn a piece of green bean despite her refusal.

"Yeah, that doesn't mean interrogate to the first degree."

"So what... it's not like-

"Stop," this time Jade shut her mouth and pushed her mashed potatoes around her plate. George was extremely uncomfortable.

"Well, I was thinking we could all go to the aquarium for Ashlyn's birthday since Dream said it was coming up soon. I think she would like seeing all the fish."

"Fishy?" Ashlyn asked looking up at her father who had become quiet at the dinner table. He forced a smile and nodded. She clapped, "fishies smell."

The dinner went on as if there wasn't a problem and George refrained from looking at Dream entirely. Any look or words he said to the other resulted in Jade's stubborn glare. It declared possession and ruthless hatred, George felt queasy.

George left Ashlyn with Sapnap in the living room after dinner. Heading to the bathroom to breathe properly. It was suffocating being in a room full of, not only a couple, but Jade's sudden amplified disgust. Seeing Dream hold her around the waist during the movie was painful. The soft smile and the little whispers in her ear, they made George hope the days went faster. He wanted to go back home, he had ever since the trip to the beach but Dream stopped him. With a pity use of a lover's endearment and a soft caress, Dream kept George chained to the Floridian soil.

It was enough, though. Staring in the mirror George decided Ashlyn's birthday was the last he had to give. He'd book the tickets tonight.

When he opened the door to the hallway Jade was leaning up against the far wall. She was sadly the same height as he was so when she stood up straight they were eye to eye. A hand flattened out her skirt and George moved out of her way. She stopped him abruptly.

"I want you to leave him alone."

George blinked, "excuse me."

Jade glanced down to the living room and back, lowering her voice, "Clay, I don't want you to talk to him."

"What?" George grit his jaw, "what the hell are you talking about?"

"You don't think I see the way you look at him? Like I don't know you're in love with him?"

"I don't..."

"Save it," she hissed showing her true colors. They were an ugly shade of envious green. "Clay is fucking oblivious, but I'm not. So, you can stay your little vacation here but I want all the rest to stop. All the looks, all the comments, and stop trying to help him when it comes to our relationship. It's between me and Clay. Not you."

George scoffed, "and if I don't listen to you? What are you going to do?"

She grinned like a Cheshire cat and stood up straighter, "I'll make him hate you. And I have some very cute pictures of the three of you together. The internet would love to see what their favorite streamers are up to. Your little bundle of joy."

George felt all his life seep out onto the floor. Jade manipulated just enough to keep George stranded. He could do nothing but obey her, if for Ashlyn's sake.

Sitting back down on the couch he didn't pay attention to the movie, he was too busy fighting back

the lump in his throat. Dream tried to make eye contact with him but George wouldn't dare look over there. He'd made his bed and was lying in it.

Ashlyn's birthday was in two days, he booked their flight home for the morning after.

Chapter End Notes

All of your comments are so sweet an encouraging. I love you guys. Thanks for reading.

The Night We Met

Chapter Summary

Ashlyn's birthday!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"I had all and then most of you, some, and now, none of you."

The Night We Met

Lord Huron

George was completely and utterly screwed. Not only had Jade decided to take refuge in Dream's room, his and Ashlyn's flight home had been canceled due to a disturbance in the Gulf. It wasn't even hurricane season but the weather was too severe for George to leave immediately.

A cold front was meeting a warm front and causing a fight in between. George was near his wit's end with *everything*. Walking on eggshells in the house was the first straw, the next was Jade's hateful looks, and then there was the lack of conversation between him and Dream. His friend took desperation to a new level every time he tried to talk to George. The other always made some kind of excuse to avoid him because his little guard dog was always a few feet away. Smiling and readjusting the ugly color of her lipstick, which was most commonly found smeared over his friend's neck. It was possession and George had no desire to challenge it.

Ashlyn was taking the short end of the stick because if George avoided someone so did she. Her quiet protest for Dream were getting more and more aggressive, but he would be damned if she was left alone with Dream and *Jade*.

"You look so pretty," George said fixing the tulle of Ashlyn's birthday dress. Not only was he dealing with the Florida drama, but his baby was growing up. It was a bittersweet travesty. "So big and grown-up."

"No, I'm not grown, Dada."

George hid a grim expression while he crouched before her on the marble swirled floor. The aquarium was the only option for a birthday celebration. Every cloud from the house to the ocean was thundering with rage and dripping with magnetic sorrow. Or maybe George was just projecting into the weather. Either way, the aquarium was an inside activity and Ashlyn seemed extremely excited about walking around and feeding fish.

"You're three," he protested. "That's almost as old as me!"

She laughed and spun around in her frilly dress, the one she'd picked out herself, "no. You're really really old."

An offended hand shot across George's chest making Ashlyn laugh even more. Silly and sweet, he looked at her like and saw the world. There was a fear one day she'd go off and forget about him, grow old, fall in love and leave him all alone, but now wasn't that day. Now, Ashlyn clung to him

with sweet smiles and happy giggles. After a few seconds, he dropped the offended act and pulled her into a purposely squished hug.

"Too tight, Dada!"

Ashlyn's dramatics must come from him, he thought briefly. George squeezed a bit tighter and pampered her in kisses before declaring, "I love you."

"Love you, too." Once released, Ashlyn tugged him towards Sapnap who had on a hot pink birthday pin. As they approached he realized it was given by the aquarium staff because little fish were decorated over the face and the ribbon attached. It read *Happy Birthday* with a little Sharpie drawn three.

His friend immediately pulled Ashlyn up and pinned the ribbon on her matching dress. Then with a warm familiar smile, he handed George blue wristbands.

"We can go to any exhibit," Sapnap explained. "And the blue means she can feed the stingrays. And other fish."

George looked over to the window where Dream paced with his phone to his ear. The awful expression engraved on his features matched the brooding clouds in the window behind him. Grey with little inklings of lightning, it was a beautiful mess. Surrounded by the extravagant mural of the ocean, Dream should've appeared enamoring. With his usual attitude and carefree confidence, it would have been a picture to add to George's camera roll memory, but it wasn't.

The bags beneath Dream's eyes only showed he hadn't slept well in a few days. Either from too much on his mind or staying up playing a meaningless game. George knew which option it was, he could see it in the way his shoulder stayed tense. In the chewed nails. In his steps. He wondered if Jade realized these things, for Dream's sake he hoped she did.

"What about..."

"Jade's not coming," Sapnap scoffed. "I bet she's out with her 'girlfriends'."

"What's wrong with-"

"Because she has no friends." George raised a brow and Sapnap waved him off. "I did some digging. All the people that know her, know she's a dirty liar and a cheat. That's what she's doing right now."

George's breath felt tight, "cheating?" Sapnap nodded and looked back at Dream. He couldn't help but ask, "if Dream knows, why hasn't he called it quits?"

The roll of his eyes was enough to make George even more bitter, "because he loves her or whatever the fuck-"

"Bad words!" Ashlyn pinched Sapnap's nose. He readjusted her on his hip and apologized.

"He loves her?" Maybe that hadn't occurred to George, that Dream could be... in love. It just didn't make sense but... now that he thought about it, it was a possibility. One that carved out jagged cracks into his heart. He swallowed thickly.

Ashlyn looked at her Dada and said, "I wanna see fishies."

"We have to wait for Dream and Jade," George said. It tasted sharp on his tongue and he had to do

everything in his power to ignore Sapnap's sympathetic expression.

She scrunched up her nose, "I don't like Jade."

"Ashlyn," George reprimanded. "That's not nice to say."

Sapnap snorted, "don't tell Dada, but I don't like Jade either."

George sent him the most disappointed look he could muster before smiling like a dumbass. His parenting skills were definitely lacking.

Coming over and bringing the storm himself, Dream stuffed his hands deep into his pockets and smiled. It didn't meet his eyes, both were far away from the present. Sunken and hollow, George wanted to reach out to him but he stopped himself. It wouldn't be appropriate since he was with Jade. Friendly or otherwise, George had become very careful with his physical touch. All because of Jade and her perfectly crafted threats.

"She's not coming," Dream shrugged. "Says her mother doesn't want her driving in the rain."

Sapnap was a great actor because when he said, "I'm sorry, Dream. Next time," George almost believed his false comfort.

Dream just shrugged and held a wrist out for a wristband. There was hesitation but George looped it around his wrist and refrained from touching him. His friend muttered thanks and stormed off towards the first exhibit.

"Whys Dream sad, Dada?" Ashlyn held out her own wrist and George looped the band around it.

"Because Jade can't come."

"But why?"

Looping Sapnap's band he explained, "because Dream loves Jade. He wanted to see her."

"Oh," Ashlyn scrunched her nose. "Can we go see fish?"

"Yes, baby."

George let Sapnap take Ashlyn around since she seemed content from his hip height instead of the floor. The first exhibit was filled entirely with jellyfish and George grimaced at the sight of them. Each tank was one connecting wall that tore off into smaller pods, each filled with long straggly jellies. Not only were they odd-looking but for some reason, they reminded him of Dream. He could pinpoint why exactly but they did, and so did the iridescent coral in one of the larger tanks.

In the second exhibit, it was a large room full of tropical fish. Ashlyn was 'ooing' and 'aweing' at everything. Pointing this way and that. George smiled to himself and took a picture of her and Sapnap. Stood close to the glass of an arch, Ashlyn reached up above her head and rambled on about the multicolored fish dancing around with a black and white one. Little shadows caressed the two with perfect outlines of tropical marine life and lit up the photo perfectly. He saved it to his camera roll and tucked his phone back into the tiny bag he'd brought for this trip.

In the corner, Dream stood with furrowed brows as he tried to read a sign. George couldn't help himself, he walked to help the poor soul.

"It says Koi Fish tank," he teased. Taking a closer look he read, "Orange Koi represents a motherly

figure. Pink represents a daughter. And red represents intense love or infatuation-"

"Are you mad at me?" Dream's words cut through George's lifted tone immediately. The older man hesitated and looked over to find Dream staring at him. It was anger and regret and heartbreak all mixed together to form a look George never witnessed before, nor did he want to see again.

"No, why?" Carefully articulated and easy, the words floated like sand setting at the bottom of a tank.

"Why?" A breathless whisper, "really? You don't know why I'm asking?"

The sand took flight clouding up their airspace. George looked away and watched Koi fish intertwine before swimming to the top of the tank. Above them, he could faintly see the freshwater exhibit where people were feeding the fish.

"I'm not mad at you, Dream."

Gentle fingers pulled on George's elbow. One by one the touch burned, but it hurt more when he subtly pulled away. Lost fingers curled and retracted.

"You're lying to me."

"I'm not." The reassurance was ghosted over when Dream scoffed. He looked back at the tank and tilted his head. He looked so... tired. Defeated. George yearned to hold him close, to right whatever wrong's he could possibly fix.

"Have I done something..."

"No," George answered immediately. "You haven't."

"Then what's wrong?" There was an edge to his voice now, finally impatient rather than docile. "You're avoiding me and I know you're leaving early, Sapnap told me."

George glanced over to their friend and scoffed, "traitor."

Dream looked incredulous now, "what? You were just going to wake up in the morning and leave without telling me? Without... without saying goodbye."

"I thought it'd be easier that way," George muttered following Sapnap and Ashlyn towards the freshwater exhibit stairs.

"What makes you think that?"

Another scoff, "you're girlfriend."

Dream gripped George's fingers and stopped him at the top of the staircase. A wild look was swimming through his eyes when he asked, "what did she say to you?"

George let go of his hand, "nothing."

"Liar."

"I'm not causing a ruff between the two of you!" He explained, heated. "She has every right to want me gone, you know? If it was me I wouldn't like it either."

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

George gripped Dream's wrist to pull him away from all of the looking people they'd piqued the interest of. In the small corner of an exhibit, they stood amongst more jellyfish as well as ocean crabs. The tanks left a soft glow on Dream's exhausted features.

"I'm talking about us," George finally said. "I'm talking about what we used to be. What we avoid. What I won't let myself want anymore. Jade can see that, honestly, there's no way you didn't tell her something about what happened between us."

Dream pulled his lip between pretty teeth, "she knows about us, but she also knows we're just friends."

George let his head fall back while he gazed into the aquarium ceiling. It was littered with tiny fake fish and coral.

"Yes," he sighed. "That isn't the point Dream, she's threatened by me."

"She shouldn't be."

"She has every right to be!" George hissed making eye contact again. Dream looked so small here. Although standing a foot taller than George he was sunken into himself, vulnerable to this hastened argument. "If I asked you to kiss me right now would you say yes?"

"George," he exhaled, "what?"

"Would you say *yes*?" He rephrased. With curled fingers, George knocked his fist lightly over the middle of Dream's sternum. He wanted to throw a punch, take him down to his knees, then kiss him until neither could breathe. Suffocate both their lives and take them back in time. He opt to feel the rapid beat of Dream's heart beneath his curled fingers.

Dream gazed wholeheartedly at George, close enough to count every perfect eyelash on the other's eyes, "yes."

George wanted to break. Shatter and let himself fall apart, but this wasn't the time nor the place. He shoved down the lump in his throat only for the burn in his eyes to win the war. He blinked at the haze.

"That is why she has every right to want me gone." Dream's exhale felt like defeat. "I don't know everything about your relationship and frankly I don't want to. But if it was me." He looked up and faced the other's barren expression. "And if it was you. With me in her place... I'd want her gone. I'd want her gone because you would be everything. Because thinking of you with anyone else would *hurt*. It would hurt and I wouldn't be able to stand it." His fist tapped lightly on Dream's warm skin, covered by a color George could not see. "It would hurt knowing there is someone else you want more. Because it does hurt, Dream, all of it. And I don't care if she's a whore or a raging bitch but I don't wish that feeling on anyone."

"Which feeling, George?"

"Not being enough. Still holding on because you *can't* let go because you think you might drown if you do."

Dream looked down and uttered a lie fabricated by fear, "I think I'm in love with her."

George nodded while smiling sadly. He ripped off a piece of his heart for the other, "and I'm in love with *you*, Dream."

The inhale was sharp. A breath between them before George took a step back. Staring at each other like they'd never met or met a thousand times, George was glad he'd finally admitted it. It had been the heaviest storm settled in his chest for years, something too big, too important. Then it might have been a declaration, now it was a statement. A truth George didn't know how to hide any longer. A truth that now settled heavily on Dream's already weighted shoulders.

"And I'm so sorry," he chuckled wetly. Crying in an aquarium amongst jellyfish was one for the books. A beautiful humiliation. "I'm so sorry, because I've known that for *so* long. And I'm a terrible selfish friend."

"George," Dream melted tilting his head. It wasn't passion it was pity, petty fucking sympathy because he'd just poured his heart out to someone in love with another. "Look, I..."

"Don't," he wiped his face and put himself back together as he'd done for the past three years. "Don't try to smooth it over. I just need to go home. Back to England, and you need to let me."

Dream nodded, "okay, George."

Laid bare and uncomfortable George looked towards a tank and scoffed, "I fucking hate jellyfish."

Dream was no longer with him. With his hands in his pockets, he looked haunted, "reminds me of Heatwaves."

George grimaced, "wrong time to bring that up."

"I'm sorry." Dream shrugged.

"Come on," George whispered. "It's still Ashlyn's birthday. We need to look happy for her at least."

George wasn't exactly happy, but a burden had finally been lifted and it felt liberating. Free of a heavy secret he probably should've kept to himself.

"Happy birthday, Ashlyn," George picked up his baby to let her feed the stingrays. "Did you have fun?"

Her cheeks were covered in the sticky residue of a lollipop Dream had given her. And around her wrist was a little dolphin bracelet from Sapnap, she seemed content if not exhausted.

She gripped George's cheeks with salt-watered hands, "fun. Did Dada have fun?"

Ashlyn could see through his lie, "I did!"

"Saps says Dream is stupid."

George huffed, "that's not nice Ash."

Her pigtailed bounced while she nodded. To portray what she couldn't form with words, Ashlyn hugged close to him.

"Night night, Dada."

George watched Sapnap head across the parking lot to bring the car around. Dream walked up next

to him silent as the oncoming night. It was like he was no longer here, just a presence. A body next to his own. It wasn't until he spoke that George turned to him.

"I thought about you every day for two years, George." He dug his shoe over a bump on the aquarium floor. "Day and night. I couldn't understand why you left. Felt like I wasn't enough. You... you broke my heart then. And I'm sorry I'm breaking yours."

George hummed and readjusted Ashlyn's dozing body, "as long as you're happy, It won't bother me."

"That's another lie."

"How would you know?"

"Because I know you."

And maybe that was their problem, being so known and yet so oblivious to the other. George shrugged. Because what was he supposed to say to that? Beg Dream to pick him instead? He'd never stoop that low, alone maybe, but not when he had Ashlyn to think about. Not when she would always come first no matter what situation presented itself for George. He was determined to channel all the love he'd given to Dream back and keep it close. Lock it down and never let it escape from its confinement.

It would sting forevermore, rejection not once but twice. George didn't think about it now, but he would later. Later when he was home in his quiet, lonely apartment he would let himself become bitter. Let the rage win over his sadness. Dream seemed to be the cause of all of George's major life choices and it made him briefly wish they had never met. But that was his heartbreak talking, burning a bridge that had already plummeted. This was it. The storm was clearing and the two of them were going their separate ways once and for all.

"Thank you," George said.

"For what?"

He had a list. For the former kisses, the texts after he left, the calls, the looks, the endearments, the love, the friendship, for knowing him.

All he could say was, "everything."

Sapnap pulled the car around and George took Ashlyn out into the soft sprinkle of rain.

Chapter End Notes

I love this chapter because of how emotionally straining it is. I like to feel something when I read/write. Lol

Thanks for reading ♥

Ghost of You

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"So I drown it out like I always do."

Ghost of you

5 Seconds Of Summer

They'd been here before, the inevitable goodbye. All those years ago George was pulled into two tight embraces. Whispers of *soon* and coming home were played over quiet airport chatter. Sapnap had left them alone. Two people who didn't dare admit something was real between them. Instead, Dream had kissed him quietly and left with light laughter. George left with a hopeful future.

Now, he stood staring at the same terminal with no other hopes but to make it home safe. Sapnap was talking to Ashlyn and explaining how he'd come visit as soon as he could, George believed him. The other man already made plans for his trip to England. A few months out, George would see him again sometime warm and moderate. Ashlyn was upset, but George couldn't help that. She'd learned how much love was given to her here, how much extra care, extra everything. He could only hope she didn't feel cheated going back with only him.

Jade stood impatiently with Dream a little away from George. Her acrylic claws caressed Dream's bicep like he'd jump onto the plane with George, it was a fantastical wish. And she was fanatically smug.

Sapnap pulled him in tightly, "fuck you, you're leaving me again."

"I'll miss you too," he answered coolly. "Come visit soon?"

"Of course," his friend smiled. "Summer, I'll be there."

With a solemn nod, he took Ashlyn's hand and looked up to Dream. He wasn't getting a hug, that much was obvious but he didn't want to leave it open-ended. So, like when they arrived, he held out a hand. It felt like a white flag waving in honor of surrender. This almost felt like an impersonal business meeting, Dream shook his hand firmly. Not like a lover, nor a friend, they were merely acquaintances. People who were forcefully strangers, George memorized what he could of the other. Taking in his hair, his eyes, his chest, his touch, then he pulled away. In the end all the memories would never be enough.

"Bye guys," Ashlyn latched onto his leg and pressed her cheek against his thigh. "Thank you for inviting me. Inviting us."

Dream nodded and Jade waved almost aggressively. With a silent sigh, George whispered to Ashlyn and then pulled their suitcases towards their gate. He didn't look back, and if he had he would've seen Dream waiting there. Alone after Jade walked away with Sapnap. He would have found the other making decisions quietly in his mind.

When his old key made contact with the lock his breath finally settled. The jet lag pulled on his limbs but he refused to let it win out just yet.

George's apartment felt stale, unloved, and not lived in. Things were scattered from when he left. Small clutter in the heat of packing for the U.S. and making sure everything was in order. The quiet was the worst part of being back. In Florida, there was always a bit of noise. Sappnap playing a game, Dream cooking, the Tv on blast, something. Here only the sound of the clicking fan was audible. George shut the door and locked it tight behind him.

"Ashlyn," he said walking her over to the couch. "Wake up, baby. We're home."

Once set down she blinked up at him then dramatically fell over on the couch. George laughed and took a seat next to her. Running his fingers through her maddening strands of hair, he listened to the quiet.

"Why we leave, Dada?"

George wished she was old enough to understand. After answering this question at least five times on the plane he was running out of simple explanations. It didn't matter anyway, no matter how many times he explained Ashlyn just asked again.

"Because Dream doesn't want us there."

She grunted in protest, "don't lie."

He tried again, "because I needed to come home."

"Why I have to go too?"

Irritation was an easy fiend to fall into when George hadn't had enough sleep. Aching from not only the uncomfortable dig of the plane chair but the rip of contact from the people he loved, there was no patience left. He snapped, "because I'm your parent. And I say so."

"I didn't want to go!"

"Don't raise your voice."

"No!"

"Ashlyn," he hissed the name, which only made her flinch away from him. And then she fell into a tantrum of tears. George puffed and collapsed onto the couch with her. With body-wrenching tears, she wouldn't look at him. It was all falling apart, his life, his heart, his parenting skills, they were headed to the dumpster. With soothing apologetic fingers, George brushed through the tiny tangles in Ashlyn's hair. She fell asleep a few minutes later.

"Take her, please."

George's mother stood in the door frame and looked at her son. After the small glance in the mirror, he knew he looked like a mess. The purple rings beneath his eyes, the yellowish expression, his untamed hair. Ashlyn was dressed and made up like usual but it hadn't stopped her from throwing a tantrum about Dream and Sappnap every day.

"Honey," his mother said. She was sun-kissed from the vacation they'd returned a few weeks

earlier. It made her look younger, warm, and welcoming.

George looked away at the messy living room he needed to clean, "please. I can't do anything with her yelling at me like this."

Uncomfortable in his own skin he shifted embarrassed under his mother's caring gaze. She looked to Ashlyn who was yet to notice her. The little limbs of George's child flailed around while she angrily played with her toys. It had been like this for the first week back from the states. Ashlyn was angry as hell and George just trying to get by.

"What happened?"

George shook his head, "nothing. Just had to come home and she's upset about it. Can you take her? It's okay if you can't I just... I need..."

He nearly broke down when his mother pulled him into a tight embrace. With stuttering arms, George hesitated before letting himself be held for a moment then he pulled her in. His mother smelled like his childhood, a hint of mint and tea. It settled most of the nervous ricocheting from his cut-off from... well from Dream. He was like a drug and George was having extreme withdrawals.

The tears were silent when he said, "I told him I loved him and he picked her."

A loving hand came up to brush through his unwashed hair, "you put him in a difficult spot saying that when you knew he was with someone else."

That much was clear and George had beat himself up about it ever since. Doing that, saying that a moment after Dream had confessed his love for someone else... it was a shitty and selfish move. George *knew* that. In a flurry of panic and realization, he'd even sent a text apology. It was left open, obviously. Read with time and reading receipts, it was to be expected. Nonetheless, that notion tempted him to block the number and drop off the face of the earth once again. Two years all repeated like and perfect circle.

"I know," he sniffed. "I just hoped... Am I a terrible person for hoping he.."

"No, honey. You're not."

With a grouped breath, "Now Ashlyn hates me."

"She doesn't," his mother reassured glancing at her little sunshine. "She just doesn't understand what happened. I'll take her, and she can stay a few days. We miss her."

Watching Ashlyn go was, for the first time, a little relieving. With all her anger George, surprisingly, welcomed a hug as well as an 'I love you, Dada' attached to it.

Turned around to the living room, George took in how much of a mess it was. Toys and clothes were scattered everywhere and they'd only been back for a week

Swiping the leftover salt on his eyes he left the tragedy and stalked off towards the shower. It felt grimy being back in England. The air was filled with smoke rather than oxygen, the streets with spat and dirt, and the roads felt crowded. George didn't want to leave his apartment ever again, but then that was probably his heart speaking for him. Shrunken and hurt from his own doing.

Stood in the shower he gazed at the small crack of tile that dragged from the roof to the middle of the wall. When he'd first moved in, the tile was an eyesore, a problem. Now it was routine to trace

it with the back of his knuckle. Let the hot water burn off dead skin and the memory of blond hair and green eyes. It steamed and fogged the mirror while in tandem fogged George's brain. If only the feeling could last longer. If only he didn't have responsibilities pulling on him at every moment of his life. He was back now, back to reality and home. Home, it felt odd to think as he pressed his forehead to steam warmed tile.

He wasn't the type to drink alone and maybe that's why Wilbur was invited over. Sat on his newly spotless couch he offered Wilbur a drink. Not a speck of dust laid over the counters anymore. It was an impulse really, to clean and tidy things around him when he couldn't clean the mess within his skull. It was a distraction, and a good one when it came down to the nitty-gritty. Even his floors were shining.

"How was the states!" Wilbur was far too enthusiastic for someone who looked like they hadn't slept for a full day. And by his mention of studio all-nighters, George knew he hadn't had much.

"It was great," he answered vaguely. "Got to go to the beach, Ashlyn loved it."

He nodded and sipped on the first drink, while George was on his fifth, "was quite a surprise to see you hang out with them again. But I'm glad man, you needed a bit of excitement."

"Yeah," George waved him off. "Tell me about you, why do you look like the walking dead?"

Hazy and warm George sunk deep into his couch cushions and listened to his friend talk. About some of their other friends, about his new album, his recent life activities. It was a back and forth conversation before George had too much to drink. Instead of speaking he decided to smile and nodded along to anything Wilbur said. The boy seemed to be in need of a distraction, he assumed. Because there was no way Wilbur hadn't caught on to George tuning him out for the past few minutes.

"George?"

He looked up from his empty cup, "yeah?"

"I have to go," his friend stood to full length. Towering over him, George wished he was that tall. "They said it's going to snow. Don't want to get caught in that!"

That was another downfall of being back in England. In Florida, they went to the beach in February, in the U.K. they wore several coats along with wool gloves. Possibly stuffed hand warmers into his pocket as well as Ashlyn's

"Of course," he made to stand and felt his drink sit heavily in his stomach. "You need me to walk you out?"

"That's alright, mate." Gentle hands pressed George back down against the couch. "I'll be alright, how about you call your mother, I bet Ashlyn is about to go to sleep."

Both ears felt like they were in a fishbowl when he nodded, thanking Wilbur for coming round. The other man was still far too enthusiastic when he took towards the front door.

When the wood finally shut he pulled out his phone and dialed the number. His mother answered almost immediately.

"Honey!" George smiled to himself when hearing Ashlyn's laughter in the background of the

phone. "We're watching Frozen since it's about to snow! How are you? I might need to keep Ashlyn a few more days since the roads are said to be closing."

"I'm okay," he muttered as sober as he could manage to sound. Keeping it short George said, "was just calling to tell her goodnight and that I love her."

"Oh!" His mother said something inaudible before someone else spoke, "Dada?"

"Hey, baby," another smile crossed his heavy lips. "I'm going night night but I wanted to call and say I love you."

There was a small pause, "I love you too, Dada. Sorry for being mean."

The ache returned. He huffed, "that's okay, Ash. Tell grandma to call me if you need me, okay?"

"Okay, bye! Love you!" George wanted to say more but his child seemed preoccupied and hung up the phone with silly giggles.

With his phone screen black, he laughed to himself. Maybe it was the alcohol or maybe he felt alright for the first time since arriving back. Ashlyn would eventually forget some of the adventures in the states and George would eventually learn to cope with his mind's torment.

The knock on the door startled him. Mostly because he couldn't remember how long he'd sat there and partly because it was abrupt and loud. Taking a glance around the apartment he noticed Wilbur left both his gloves. That must be the explanation for the hasty knocking. With the other man in mind, he shakily stood and grabbed the glove. A fond smile playing on his lips.

Turning the lock he smiled and pulled the door, "Wilbur, you're an idiot that's going to freez..."

Maybe George had drank too much. Maybe it was alcohol poisoning because his eyes were clearly playing tricks on him. Blond hair stuck out from beneath a black beanie while the rest of this man was covered in several coats and a bit of snow. On the doorstep behind him was a tiny suitcase also covered in melting snow. George swallowed. Then he closed the door. And waited. Listening to his labored breath. The knocks came again and something ached when he creaked the wood back open.

He wasn't sober enough for this, "why are you on my doorstep?"

"I'm in love with you too."

The pause lasted a long time. Cold air freezing his nose. George couldn't breathe properly.

"Why," god he wished he was sober. "Why are you on my doorstep?"

"I'm in love with you too."

George blinked, "I..."

It wasn't often George couldn't hold his drink, but this was enough to bring up chunks while stone-cold sober. He left the door open and shuffled to his sink just in time to live the tortures of drinking his problems away.

The front door shut and George forced himself to breathe through his nose. It wasn't real. He was looking at the mess of his reflection in the stainless steel facet. Both eyes were bloodshot and he looked pale under the overhead light. The kitchen was scrubbed down hours earlier and now all

he could think was how he'd have to clean it all again. George groaned then slumped into a kitchen chair forehead resting on the sink.

"You're drunk." Dream quietly moved through his apartment just to push the brown hair from his weary eyes. "How much have you drank."

George teared up and pushed his hand away, "enough to know you're not real."

"What?"

"It's never real." Closing his eyes felt like a relief, if only for a moment. An inebriated hand gesture, "always fake when you care. Always a dream."

"My love," Dream whispered crouching before his friend. George was startled now, flinching back from the man before him. Clearly not an alcohol-induced hallucination. His heart was going too fast and his stomach clenched again. "I'm here."

George couldn't lift his head from the counter without spinning, "why... why are you here?"

"Because I love you."

George threw up again and it was the most humiliating moment of his life. Dream took it gracefully and let the other heave into the sink while he pushed his hair from those pretty brown eyes.

A cold damp rag cleaned up his face and ghosted over his cheeks while he looked. As if the sun was falling from the sky George watched Dream fuss quietly over him. Wrapped in several coats, the man looked flight ruffled and exhausted. Maybe a bit cold around the nose and ears. He looked like love and care and something in George's chest whispered home. When the other came close to his view a hand was placed softly on his cheek.

"Why are you here?"

Dream met his eyes and touched the fringe damp from the towel, "I wasn't letting you go like that. Not like that, or ever again."

A painful bit of sobriety filtered into the beautiful haze, George pulled his hand away. Moving Dream's he asked, "what about Jade?" It was a regretful whisper.

"Don't know don't care," Dream shrugged kissing George's palm. "We got into a fight and she slipped how cruel she was to you." George raised a brow. "I broke up with her."

"Fuck," George muttered. Then he grimaced, "but you *love* her. And I'm not there why does it matter?"

Dream looked him dead in the eyes, "I loved her because I couldn't love you. The only reason I was with her in the first place was to try and get over you. Over our summer. And-" he paused and swallowed- "then I realized how I could've had you then. Now and she didn't make much sense anymore. I love you, George."

The hazy tears felt inevitable, "you don't love me. You love her. You *told* me.."

"I told you a lie," he finished. "And I'm so sorry. For that, for this, for all of it. For how I treated you that summer. For not trying harder to stay your friend when you pushed us away. For being scared so badly to ruin this that I ruined it anyway."

George sniffled and said, "okay."

Something softened on Dream's stern features, "okay?"

The nod was slow enough to keep the spinning to a minimum, "I would yell at you right now, but I'm pissed."

The laugh was wheezy and familiar and loving, "pissed." It was a tease to the accent that surfaced more while inebriated. "You are aren't you? Come on how about I put you to bed and we can talk in the morning."

George let his friend do just that. Like a child, Dream helped him towards his bedroom and pulled the blankets back. It smelled like his shampoo and a bit of laundry detergent since he'd washed everything in his house the second he got home.

Dream shuffled around his room as if seeing it for the first time. And that's when George realized he was seeing it for the first time. With a dopey smile, George let Dream tuck the blanket up under his chin and then move to leave.

George gripped lightly to his lingering hand, "don't leave me."

"George..."

"Please."

Dream protested no longer. Shuffling under the blankets George pulled him in close and rested his forehead against a strong sternum. Enlaced with warmth. With love. Home. Every bone in his body ached with the feeling.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading!!!!

Sleep On The Floor

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Decide on me, yeah decide on us."

Sleep On The Floor

The Lumineers

Freshly showered, George sat on the edge of the miniature settee in Ashlyn's room. It was lavender to match the butterflies amongst the walls. The aura of being in Ashlyn's room was the same only altered by a fantasy that walked in his sleepy mind.

Tan fingers ghosted over baby photos rested in pretty frames on the dresser. His soft smile clenched tightly in George's stomach threatening to take him to the floor. It was the sun peeking perfectly through the window that made him look away. The dust dancing around those pretty green irises would be too much. It would feel counterfeit when he was standing right there.

"I like Ashlyn's room." Dream's voice was quiet, as if not to disturb the peace. George was grateful because his hangover was threatening to reap him. A finger trailed over fake wings, "the butterflies are a nice touch."

"My mother's idea."

The hum of acknowledgment settled George's nerves enough to find the words to ask. Cautious, "so you broke up with Jade."

"Correct." Dream didn't look up, he pressed his hand down on a tiny jack in the box and made it pop up.

"Then you got on a plane to come talk to me?" A nod. "You're insane."

Dream scoffed in offense, "fuck off I thought it was romantic."

"And if I had turned you away at my door? It was freezing what if..."

"I..." Dream cut him off softly. "I just hoped you would let me talk before kicking me to the curb."

George dropped his head into both hands and breathed through his nose. What was he supposed to do now? A few hours ago everything ached and burned and now Dream was offering an out. He was offering... well he didn't exactly know what the fuck Dream was offering. He swallowed thickly, "what do you want exactly?"

Dream came to sit next to him with the bear he bought Ashlyn in hand, "to make it simple, you."

George flushed then couldn't make eye contact with him. It felt like far too much, instead, he eyed the well-loved bear Ashlyn named Roni. She slept with it now mumbling about who gave it to her and its name.

"And I'm willing to let you have me," he sighed, the bear now his own hand, "but I come with attachments now. An attachment I know you never planned or even wanted to have."

"I love Ashlyn as much as I love you," Dream said. "And you're right. That still stands, I don't want any of my own kids and that will probably not change. But, if she'll have me, then I want to be there for *her*. I want to be there for both of you. The three of us."

George shattered in a whole new light then. His heavy forehead dropped to Dream's shoulder while both of his own stuttered. A laugh turned into quiet sobs. It was a new revelation, being picked. To be the one Dream loved. All he could think about were the soft fingers in his hair and the quiet acceptance of his silent breakdown. He had wanted this since that wonderful summer. Wrapped up in sheets and painful photographs that still remained, George hoped to have this. To have Dream all to himself, for him to want with the same lovely devotion. Now here it was handed to him on a silver platter and all he could do was tear up.

"Why are you crying." It was a teasing tone, one that George rid with soft violence. "Don't smack me!"

"I'm not crying, idiot." He swiped the clear tears from his eyes and stood up. Sniffles followed him out the door. Dream walking along him just to pull him in by the wrist. "What do you-"

George should've expected the kiss. Honestly, he knew Dream wanted it since new years. Under those lifeless fireworks, he pulled away, now George pushed forward so fast he nearly fell on his unbalanced feet. A smile pressed soundly against his lips eliciting a sweet groan from his chest. Warm hands curled gently on his smaller waist seeking skin beneath his old worn t-shirt. The sigh was final, uncontrollable, and well he couldn't really think past the kiss when Dream pushed closer his mouth opening as invitation.

"What do I what?" He guesses the unfinished phrase and brushed his nose sweetly against the other's. George involuntarily flushed beet red.

"You're in my apartment," he heaved out. "You kissed me in my apartment in England."

Dream pushed in for another kiss, "yes, my love, that's what I'm doing."

The groan was deep-rooted in his ribs while he pulled Dream backward, "you want to do something else to me in my apartment?"

His laugh sounded like a lover's melody, "where's Ashlyn?"

George's stomach dropped with panic before he realized, "with my mother."

"Why?" Dream tucked brown hair behind the soft skin of George's ear. Then a kiss was placed below it, gentle yet suggestive in every other sense. The goosebumps were welcomed.

"She was angry at me." Both eyes closed on their own a silent surrender to Dream's advances. The other took the offer and walked them further into George's bedroom, the latter let himself be led backward. "For taking her away from Sapnap. From you."

"I'm sorry." It was a breath ghosted over his lips.

With a huffed breath he pulled them back and let Dream climb above him. Pressed back into his bedsheets it was a beautiful recreation of June. The same dirty gold hair, the same man, the same lofty laugh. Only the weather and location factored out.

"Stop talking about Ashlyn and kiss me." He all but begged, "kiss me until I don't miss you anymore."

"My love." The endearment was pressed against soft lips and breathed into the air as they entangled themselves. George had not done this since that summer. Not a soul had tainted his own by laying above or below him since Dream. He knew the other had after him but it didn't matter as long as he'd be the last. The last person for kisses, for hugs, for love, for sex, for anything, George was determined to be Dream's last.

And maybe that was why he ravenously stripped the other bare. A jacket on the floor. Followed by his shirt, his jeans, his socks, his boxers. Everything, George wanted everything and anything from Dream. And in return he gave himself. Presented like an offering to a god George let Dream take him apart.

Kisses down his torso. Down his hips. Hands traveling from his cheeks to his thighs. There was an endless amount of sighs, of gasps, of moans. He panted into another's kiss. Letting Dream open him up, it felt like settling sand. Kicked up in a storm George finally floated to the bottom as Dream pushed closer to him. Closer and closer and felt like it was never close enough. Miles across the ocean, a chair away, a wall of emotions, another, it was close now.

He dropped his head back when Dream pushed in and rested against him, "my god."

"You're really enjoying this," he chuckled creeping forward until they were flush. A low satisfied groan trickles between them. "I am too don't get me wrong but you seem to *really* enjoy this."

"Fuck off, I haven't had sex in two years." Blinking away the haze of tears he looked up at the man above him. Tan arms rested on the side of his head while fingers brushed through his fringe. "And it's with you."

A kiss to his nose, "It's with me."

There were still a million things they needed to figure out. Starting with how they were going to continue this relationship with the distance. It would be hard not having this, not being close, and George wanted to sink with the thought but he could do it later. He promised himself that whatever conflicts they had he'd resolve them later. All George wanted right now was Dream and he had him, and once they started to actually move further, all coherent thoughts ceased to exist. It became a long stream of *Dream* and a bit of begging. Slow and hot and way too good for a mundane Wednesday morning. His heart beat up against Dream's.

George pulled them closer and shut himself up by kissing Dream soundly. With legs wrapped around the other's waist, he rode the wave of pleasure until it reached a peak. Whitening his vision and breaking him with quiet whines, he came way too fast for it to not be embarrassing. Dream only chuckled and finished a few moments later, clearly in the same boat with how pleasurable it was.

In heated breath, they rested. Fingers traced once well-known skin in the soft morning light of the window. Relearning what they both used to know, the bumps, the curves, the sunspots. Seven over Dream's shoulder three on George's forearm.

"I've missed you," George mumbled against the warmth of his lover. "Every day I miss you."

"I've missed you too." He dragged a finger over the dip of the older man's hip memorizing the shape, the feeling. George let him do as he pleased, sated and dazed he wasn't going to complain. The heat of another body on his own was a form of paradise even better than the body belonging to Dream.

"I tried my best to be a good friend when it came to Jade," was George's solemn declaration. "Then

I said that to you in the aquarium, it was selfish... and I'm sorry."

He felt Dream's hair tickle his chin when he moved in protest. Gentle presses of his lips trailed up the pale expanse of his neck until they reached his ear.

"Don't apologize for telling me how you feel." A final kiss below his right eye, "never apologize for that."

George's smile was tender around the edges, "you're perfect, aren't you."

"No," he replied. "Neither of us are."

"Speak for yourself." He loved how easy the laughter came.

It wasn't until they were cleaned up and dressed that George brought up a different thought. He didn't want to leave their calm bubble, but life was outside and they had to go back to reality at some point.

"Do you want to meet my parents?"

Dream stilled while picking up his jacket, "I've met them before."

"Not in person." George's lip was tight between his teeth, "I have to go get Ashlyn... I wanted to know if you would... if you want to come with me?"

"I thought the roads were closed."

George smiled and peeked outside, "my city likes to exaggerate on the weather severity. And besides, the storm passed, people are on the roads again."

"British people," Dream muttered fondly. George waited for an answer and received a heart-stuttering smile along with it. "I'll come with you. I want to ask them something anyway."

George raised a brow but Dream only shrugged.

"Dada!" George felt the wind knock out of him when his baby came crashing down the stairs. Within the clutch of her arms, he picked her up and spun around.

"Ashlyn!" Her laughter filled the room when the spinning stopped. Doused in butterfly kisses George asked, "did you have fun?"

"Yes," she nodded hastily. "Grand make cookies. I slept in blanket forts!"

George raised his brows, "oh wow! Did you?" Ashlyn nodded and George let a small grin take over his cheeks, "I have a surprise for you."

"Prize?"

The door opened just as she spoke so all George had to do was turn and let her see the visitor. Dream entered with a shiver and a pink nose shutting the wind out behind him. The effortless appeal Dream had following him around drove George to feel a bit envious. That was until a smile was passed his way than to Ashlyn.

"Dream!" Ashlyn lit up and made gabby hands. "Dada put down. Dream!"

"Ashy ash!" George rolled his eyes and handed his baby over to the blond. He took her gracefully and gave her even more tiny kisses. He felt awfully replaced. "I missed you."

"Wheres Saps?"

"He's back in Florida," Dream explained. "With patches."

"Patch," she turned to George. "We go back, Dada?"

George was grateful for his parents' timing. His mother rushed over covered in flour while offering a cookie tray. They were chocolate chip and George took advantage before even thinking about introducing the man holding his daughter. With a mouthful of cookie, he looked up and found his mother's tightened eyebrows.

"Who's this?"

"Oh!" George covered his mouth and swallowed down a big bite of chocolate chip. "This is Dr..." well he couldn't introduce him to his mother with that name, could he? "Clay... and Clay this is um my mother."

"So this is *the* Dream?" George guessed the name-ship sailed a long time ago. His mother side-eyed him and it screamed so many concerns and complaints within one look that he hastily started to finish his cookie. "Well, hello. It's nice to finally meet you. I've heard so much about you."

Dream jostled Ashlyn to rest against his right hip and shook George's mother's hand, "I hope it's all good things."

His mother grinned, "no, not really."

"Mother!" George sputtered only to hear her laugh.

"Only a joke honey, come in we're in the middle of baking!"

Ashlyn struggled to get down and Dream let her, both watched the child run off after her grandmother. With a small bit of embarrassment, he looked up at Dream only to burst into laughter by the latter's sour expression.

Dream nudged his shoulder and said, "Clay? This is *Clay*? Why does it sound so weird when you say it?"

"I don't know," he said on defense. "I wasn't going to just introduce you as *Dream*!"

"Alright, Georgenotfound, I think we should..." he gestured towards the kitchen and George punched his shoulder.

"Fuck off."

With a close whisper to his ear, he said, "I love you, *Georgenotfound*." George punched him affectionately this time but still made sure to add a shove for good measure.

"So... he's here," George's mother whisper yelled. They were in the kitchen while Dream spoke to Ashlyn and his father in the living room. Whatever conversation they were having was serious enough for Dream's eyebrows to furrow and look tense. It was his concentrated face, George wondered what the fuck he was talking about.

"He's here," George confirmed. His mother peeked around the kitchen wall so obviously George had to pull her back to keep her from looking like an eavesdropper. "Stop that, you're going to make him uncomfortable if he sees you."

"Honey," his mother exaggerated. "He's gorgeous! You showed me a picture but I didn't think much of it. I see why you're so stuck on him."

"Mother," he groaned. "Stop."

"Fine, fine," she waved him off and started to make tea. "So, he's here but a few days ago you were crying over him."

George snorted and looked down at the table, "he broke up with his girlfriend after they fought. She was... let's just say she was a sneaky person. And then last night he just showed up like some romantic love interest and said he..."

"He loves you," his mother finished. "Well, that much is clear honey. The way he looks at you enough to tell."

George groaned, "it was a surprise mother."

"Sure it was." She may play coy but her smile was genuine. They acted as if they weren't but the two were desperately trying to eavesdrop on Dream's conversation. Neither had any luck.

When the kettle sang and George's mother poured tea, he was eager to bring it out to his father. Carefully he turned the kitchen corner and only caught the end of a phrase. "I think he'd be happy."

"What are we talking about?" George asked a little too cheery to not be suspicious.

"American football," his father frowned. "I find it quite intriguing."

George huffed and sat next to Dream on the couch. Ashlyn showed him her third cookie and ate it like she wouldn't be whining about a stomach ache later. Dream kissed her cheek then ruffled George's hair. It all felt a little too domestic, too familiar, too natural. His parents loved Dream even if his father seemed stern about the situation. His mother wouldn't stop talking about the gorgeous man George brought home. And Ashlyn, well he already knew Ashlyn's opinion. The fifth tantrum after being home for a week was enough for everyone.

So all George could do the entire evening was smile like an idiot. It was like everything finally clicked into place. No more painful pining or supportive behind-the-scenes friend advice. George vowed to never do that again even if it split him in two.

After dinner, Dream walked with a sleeping Ashlyn gripped to his chest alongside George. The cold air was refreshing after having to endure his mother's prodding questions.

"What were you talking about with my father?" Yet again, George was desperate to know whatever Dream wasn't telling him but he only shrugged. "Really, nothing?"

A sly smile, "American football."

"Bullshit."

"Bad words, Dada." Ashlyn waved a tired hand at him, both eyes shut. Even in her sleep, she was the language police.

"Right." George pulled his keys out of his pocket and unlocked his apartment door. Dream took Ashlyn to her room while George shut and locked the front door. His front door. She was already half asleep so if Dream was putting her down he would let him.

Pulling his coat off, George read a few texts on his phone. Mostly from Sapnap asking about how his lover friends were doing and if Dream made it there safe. He huffed and sent him back a small text explaining that everything was fine.

Fine? He could almost hear Sapnap's voice. *That's it?!?!?*

Warm arms snaked around his waist and pulled him back. George only smiled and finished a text to Sapnap.

"What does he want?" The kisses on his neck were lovely and addictive. He tilted his neck for more.

"To know if you're alive." George hummed at the attention, "how's my baby?"

"Asleep, despite the five cookies you're mother fed her." It was surreal to sigh so contently. George had let himself enjoy it, all of it, until now. Now was when he needed to talk. Figure out everything, Dream must've felt his mind turning.

"What is it?"

Sinking back into Dream's safe embrace he said, "how are we going to do this? Me and you. We..." his voice fell to a gentler tone, "you're all the way across the ocean. And I'm never going to get my visa. It'd be ten times worse with Ashlyn... I just..."

Dream set his chin on George's shoulder and said, "you could marry me."

"Real funny," he snorted and waited for the punch line. The silence took his breath away. "Wait...What?"

"Marry me."

Chapter End Notes

Mm, look at that cliffhanger. It's cute. Also look at that abstract smut, I think it fit the feeling of this book. ☺

Have a great day lovely. Thank you for reading.

Easy

Chapter Summary

⚠Minor Panic attack⚠

It's not graphic just thought I'd let you know before hand. Stay safe happy reading♥

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"What the hell did we do? Tell me we'll make it through."

Easy

Troye Sivan

They stared at each other for what felt like years when in reality it had only been two days of this decision. George rested up against his headboard with a tiny box and Dream's easy smile. He debated execution for how annoying and beautiful the expression was. For what the look meant.

"And if I say no?"

Dream shrugged, "doesn't mean we can't try this out. The distance."

George flicked the box open for the millionth time and looked at the ring with pretty engravings. He shut it back with a click. It was merely a few ounces but it felt like tons within his tiny palm. Dream must've gotten it the second him and Jade broke up, because it was merely a week and a half later that Dream sat before him with it. Malleable beneath the afternoon light he looked effortless.

"What about Ashlyn?"

"What about her?"

A distinct frown, "what are we going to tell her? Who are you supposed to be to her?"

"I think she can decide that." Dream looked down at the sleeping child between them. Ashlyn's small hand curled into the pocket of Dream's sweatpants grounding her subconsciously while George rested on the other side of her back. It was Ashlyn's usual nap time, although George noted she'd stopped feeling tired as the years went on. He soon believed nap time would cease to exist. "If we're married I'm her... well legally I want to be her stepdad. She's young enough to not remember me *not* being here if that's what..."

"No, I..." George chewed the thought over and curved a palm in Ashlyn's hair. There were so many things George wanted to ask. How would they work this out? Was Dream really ready for that responsibility? What happens if this doesn't work out? So many questions and so many words but nothing rose to the surface. Only the feeling of being picked despite Ashlyn was the main thought of his consciousness. "And you're sure? That you want her... that you want *me*?"

"I'm sure."

"Isn't this too soon?" He tried, "You've barely reached your mid-twenties and I already have a child and I just don't want to take life away from you when..."

"My love," Dream rested a gentle palm on his left cheek. "I've known you since we were what teenagers? I love you, and I would hope dating would lead to this anyway. But if we do it now there's no more waiting."

"I don't want to tie you down," George admitted clearly.

"You aren't," he replied. "I promise. There isn't anything else I can say to convince you other than I'm sure. And I'll still be sure five years from now just like I was when we met. And when you kissed me the first time. And when you left."

The exhale was tell enough to his answer but it wasn't entirely his decision in the end. Ashlyn may only be three but George still valued her opinion, besides it was a big deal to move cities let alone move to a different country.

"Baby," George muttered curving a soft strand of feathery hair. "It's time to wake up."

"No," she said firmly then proceeded to inch away from him. Now in Dream's personal space she snuggled down and tried to sleep longer. Too bad Dream wasn't on her side this time.

"Ashlyn, you've slept for two hours." Dream huffed, "And Dada said to wake up."

"Up up baby, I wanna ask you something important."

She squinted open one eye and leveled a stare at George. His head tilted with amusement. "Portant?"

"About Dream, and Sapnap, and patches."

The groan the three-year-old emitted was enough for the both of them to chuckle. She acted so grown up for her age and George could only feel bittersweet about it. Nonetheless, Ashlyn sat up and climbed into Dream's open arms, George felt replaced again. Dream mouthed an apology that the other disregarded with an eye roll.

"What in the box, Dada?"

George opened the ring to show her and watched both green eyes widen completely. The silver band almost sparkled underneath the room light or maybe George was just star-struck by its realness.

"Pretty!" She reached forward gently and he let her hold the box. It was small in his hands but in Ashlyn's the ring looked bigger than life. "For me?"

Dream leaned forward and rested his chin lightly on Ashlyn's bed-mussed hair. "No, it's Dada's. I wanna marry him. Do you know what that means Ashlyn?"

"No." Both of her cheeks bunched with frustration while she handed George back the ring. Small fingers reached up to grip both of Dream's cheekbones. He kissed her hand.

"You know grandma?" Ashlyn nodded. George asked, "and grandpa?"

"Yes, Dada." Her impatience was as clear as the proud grin on Dream's face. Traitor.

He sighed and shifted against his bed's headboard, "they are married. And they are *my* mum and

my Dada."

"I no have a mum," Ashlyn said it so confidently George could only scoff. Dream looked on the verge of frowning and needing to give his reassuring affection. George shook his head.

"I know, baby." Dream pushed hair out of Ashlyn's vision then reached over to squeeze George's hand. "But they love each other, and they are married."

"Oh!" Ashlyn leaned back against Dream and said, "grand pictures in the poofy dress."

"Yes," George said. "They got married because they love each other."

Ashlyn's eyes widened, "oh... and Dada loves Dream?"

"Yes," Dream answered for him. "And Dream loves your Dada."

"Dada gonna wear a poofy dress?"

His immediate frown was only heightened by Dream's boisterous laughter. George pushed the other's forehead back until it softly thumped the padded headboard.

"Ha ha very funny shut up, Dream." Ashlyn's giggles were fed off of Dream's before she climbed him like a jungle gym. To save him from a child attack, George picked her up by the waist just to cuddle her and lean back against Dream's chest himself. It was a little war for attention, and George was determined to win. A heap of warm arms engulfed the both of them from behind keeping them safe and secure.

"I wanna marry Dream, Ashlyn." She looked up at him with those beautifully familiar eyes. "And that means Dream would be your Dada too."

Ashlyn's gaze flicked from him then over his shoulder to Dream who leaned forward and kissed chastity below George's ear. A soft and appreciative notion.

"Two Dada's?" They both nodded. She lit up with a smile, "We go back home?"

George was the one stumped now, "we are home, baby."

She shook her head hard enough to ruffle her hair, "home with Patch and Saps. On sky trip. Home."

George was speechless. Maybe the feeling hadn't been one-sided. Ashlyn called it home and she was only three. She knew, she must've felt it while they were there. The happiness, the love, and... home.

"We would get married and then go home," Dream said for him. "But you wouldn't get to see grandma as much, that's why Dada is worried."

"See grand for Christmas?" Ashlyn reached out and gripped George's frowning expression with chubby hands. "And granp for Christmas?"

The tears were forming a lump in his throat but George pushed them down. This wasn't something to cry over. "Yeah. We'll see them for Christmas, we can work that out."

Ashlyn nodded twice, "we go home now. Go with Dream."

"Yeah?" She nodded again and George couldn't help but pull her into for a tight cuddle. Dream kissed her cheeks over George's shoulder just to hear her giggle.

When Ashlyn pushed away she said, "kiss kiss. Like grand and granp."

George huffed out an airy laugh, "Ash..."

"No," she crossed her arms. "Not lie if you kiss kiss."

Dream grinned and turned George to him by the chin. A hand stopped the action of lips, "I don't wanna kiss in front of her."

"Kiss kiss or lie Dada."

"It's not a lie, Ash!"

"Just," Dream leaned in and pecked him chastely on the lips. "There. Better Ashlyn? Not a lie."

She clapped then crawled forward demanding, "I wan kiss kisses."

The two both obliged peppering her with butterfly kisses and tickling her until the room was only filled with sweet youthful laughter. George felt a weight lift off of his shoulders with Ashlyn's approval. George would want her blessing before he even considered his parents'. They were an afterthought that he suddenly felt a little nervous about.

He sighed, "my mother's going to freak."

"Oh she already knows," Dream mused catching Ashlyn's giggles like a disease. "I'm betting your father told her after we left."

With flat features, George looked back at Dream who hadn't stopped smiling since handing him that damn ring box. "I knew you weren't talking about football."

"So you're coming back!" George pulled the phone from his ear and looked around the restaurant to see if he'd contracted looks. "Gerge!!!"

"Sapna," George replied desperately. "Stop I'm trying to be serious. Are you okay if me and Ashlyn move in?"

"Hell yes!" Sapnap confirmed Dream's statement. "I was the one who cheered him on as he got on the plane dumbass." In a softer tone, "bring my little friend home. I miss her."

"And you are sure that I'm not taking anything away from you with..."

"George," Sapnap said. "Shut up. No. You're not! And if it comes to that I'll move in with Punz. He's looking for a roommate anyway."

George let the conversation die off when Sapnap ended up saying something about Karl. His phone met the wooden table while his forehead met his palms. Dream snorted beside him.

"Dada is stressed Ashy."

Ashlyn smiled, "Dada always stress." Then a pause. "Can't call you Dada too."

George peeked across the table at his baby. She looked so grown now, sitting in her high chair with a fork. Like a proper little lady, she must've tried to tuck a napkin in her shirt. It hadn't quite stayed ending up stuck in her shirt sleeve.

Dream adjusted the napkin and said, "you don't have to call me that, baby. You can call me whatever you want."

She frowned and dug into her macaroni rather bored of the conversation now. That was an afterthought conversation, what she would call Dream. They decided earlier to let her figure that out because forcing a parental name would inevitably be complicated. And he was already stressed about this entire marriage situation. Dream caught George's desperate stare and offered him a bite of his pasta. With a tender smile, he chewed on the noodles bitterly his own plate forgotten.

"Talk to me, idiot. Watching you brood over nothing is really getting old."

He scoffed, "it just feels too easy. And I... I have a bad gut feeling."

"Are you getting cold feet?" That made him laugh. If anything it would be Dream with cold feet, George was forever enraptured with his best friend. With his kindness, his love, his laugh, even the way he dragged his feet when he walked. With the possibility that he hated Dream, some part of his heart would yearn to be his. "Then don't worry about it."

"Yeah, you're right."

Dream was in fact *not* right. Walking home from the old pasta restaurant several teenagers came bouncing down the London pavement, unintentional messengers of bad news.

George held Ashlyn close and thought of a good lie for who she was before they spoke. It seemed to be in vain when the blabbered on.

"Aw," a tall girl said immediately. "Your baby is so cute."

"So it's true!" The girl on the left cut in, "Dream's girlfriend was telling the truth!"

George felt himself drain white as a sheet, "what?"

"Jade99 the influencer you were dating," she looked to Dream who was now as ashen as George. "Look she posted a cute photo of the three of you."

"Sarah!" Another girl hissed, "she was throwing him under the bus for cheating with George," a sidelong glance to the two of them, "no offense."

"Wait," Dream said impulsively pulling her phone away. "What?"

There it was in fine print. A quite lovely picture of Dream, George, and Ashlyn asleep on the couch snuggled down with a soft lavender blanket. The caption read

Jade99: For anyone wondering why me and Dream have ended things I would like to introduce you to this baby. She is the daughter of George, a fellow content creator of Dream's, who recently introduced her to him and I. After I met George I realized quickly that there had been something to transpire between the two and after a few weeks spent with them I confirmed it to be true. So, not only has Clay chosen to cheat on me with George but he has also chosen to play house when he's expressed how much he greatly dislikes children. Now that it's out I don't want any more questions...

"Fucking bitch," Dream muttered handing the phone back. The three teenagers looked almost scared at the serious expressions on their two favorite content creators.

George felt Ashlyn stir and hide her face in his neck after making eye contact with a teenage fan. He wrapped her hoodie over both ears and started walking silently.

Hot pulsing blood filled his ears as he walked. Leaving Dream to damage control he tried to take in deep breaths but they fell short. All of the things that could go wrong were going wrong in his mind. Ashlyn's face was open to the public. George and Dream's relationship was out to the public. Jade basically named him and Ashlyn home wreckers. Dream a cheater. His baby's face was doxed. They would ask who the mother was. It would trend on Twitter. It would... he hadn't remembered getting into his apartment all he could think about was Dream taking Ashlyn from him. Hastily he pulled her away and George leaned against the hallway wall.

It took a moment but he sunk to the floor and Dream followed like a magnet. The kiss shut everything off. Every alarm wailing in his head was disarmed as Dream kissed breath back into his soul. George raised a palm to his lover's pulse and felt the strong steady thump beneath his fingertips. He breathed against skin and felt his eyes drip with panicked sorrow.

"You're okay." Dream whispered holding them both together. Huddled on the floor, George was falling apart. They'd been here too many times, on the ground, breaking. "It's just a picture and a terrible caption. I can report it. She wasn't given consent to post that and Ashlyn is a minor."

"They know," George whispered anyway. "They'll all know."

Dream couldn't deny the truth, "yes, my love. They'll probably know now. But either we leave it alone and don't comment on the situation or we tell our own story."

George's breath shuddered down and caressed Ashlyn's back. She stayed tucked into Dream's chest seemingly frightened by the sudden change of atmosphere between the two adults. Dream was a grounding for both of them he stayed completely calm and remained ready for comfort when he looked on the edge of murder. George fell even more in love, he kissed his appreciation into Dream's temple.

"I..." George exhaled. "I want to tell our story." Dream made to reply but he was swiftly cut off, "but not now. I want to act like it's not there for now. For now, I want to marry you. I want to pack all of our stuff and move back home."

Dream leaned his forehead against George's and let his lips harbor a tender smile, "I'm so sorry."

"You have shit taste in girls," George huffed finally breathing properly. He could've started a fight about this, about Jade. And maybe a few weeks ago George would have, he would have gone in on Dream. Hollered about how this was his fault, but it wasn't. Jade was simply a bitch. And whether Dream had stayed with her or broken up George felt she would've done this anyway. He can remember her whispering her greedy intentions in the bathroom hallway, she didn't have a sweet bone in her body.

"I know." George ran fingers through soft hair. And Dream said, "But not in boys."

He huffed, "maybe not."

It was maybe five minutes later that their phones started ringing off the hook. Texts and comments and calls and... George texted his mother to let her know then shut off the device completely. Dream only answered the call from Sapnap then did the same. They didn't have to deal with it immediately. Hell, they didn't have to deal with it at all if they really didn't want to, but George promised himself he would.

He needed a month. Enough to talk about their marriage, to discuss the visa, enough to move back home. George needed time and Dream seemed ready to give it to him.

He brushed a hand through George's hair and kissed between his brows. It was a silent apology, a quiet reassurance, George sighed so deeply he forgot about the world for a little bit. Wrapped in his small family he let it go just for a moment.

Chapter End Notes

This only two more chapters after this one. Almost done!!! Thank you for all the kind comments. I see all of them and I appreciate all of you.

Nobody

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Fuck it, I'll stay 'til I'm the last one left."

Nobody

Martin Jensen, James Arthur

It was warm. A beautiful recreation of the sun wrapped within blankets and a duvet. The star itself hadn't made an appearance yet, still stuck beneath a crescent moon in the middle of the summer night. A comforting thunderstorm thundered over the Floridian soil and rocked the house's inhabitants in its lullaby. George subconsciously let out a noise and wondered why he was awake. When it rained he always slept like the dead, comforted by the calming drops on the roof. Incremented with the slow dripping notion.

Dream still slept soundly next to him. Eyes casting a beautiful shadow of long lashes while he breathed with rhythmic tandem. A heavy arm was thrown over George's midsection while the other rested beneath the pillow they'd shared, it kept the two secure within the queen-sized bed. Their bed. He tucked in closer to his lover and sighed into the skin of the other's neck. Dream pulled him closer within his sleep nudging his nose against George's forehead subconsciously. It was tender and perfect and protected... and then George heard Ashlyn cry out with the thunder. He blinked in hopes it was his imagination but nonetheless she cried out once more. While trying to pull away Dream grunted and tightened his grip.

"Dream," George whispered. "Ashlyn is crying."

"Sleep," he tried.

"She's probably scared of the weather." He groaned.

A gentle kiss landed on the tip of George's forehead when Dream said, "fine, I'll get her."

George wouldn't protest if he seemed so keen on rousing the petrified child. A stray hand felt the absence of Dream's warmth while he watched his retreating shoulders through lidded eyelids. Bare with only the cover of sweatpants George watched a great love leave to bring in a kin love back quietly. Ashlyn was blubbing about rain in Dream's arms and he smiled with a droopy expression and soft sleep creases.

"It's just rain, baby." Dream muttered letting Ashlyn crawl up the bed to George. "It's not going to hurt you."

George opened the blanket to help Ashlyn slip underneath. He swaddled her up with an arm and waited for Dream to come back to bed.

She sniffed, "promise?"

"Promise," Dream said. He laid down and completed the circle with another arm around Ashlyn. She sighed contently and reluctantly closed her eyes.

George pressed a kiss against her hair while breathing in the gentle smell of apple shampoo. It felt like home and love and... Dream looked at him from the other side of her head. It was the look George had yearned to keep. The one Jade stole from him with her perfectly shaped face.

Those green irises harbored comfort while sending off low tones of sweet enraptured love. George basked in it. In this warmth from his little family.

Ashlyn shifted at the thunk of thunder that shook the house a bit, "Dada?"

"Right here, Ashlyn."

A small hand came to grip his cheek, brushed just beneath his eye. Another thunderclap. She reached with her other hand.

"Pap pap?"

Dream pressed closer and kissed Ashlyn's cheek with silent appreciation, "we're both here, baby. Night night."

"Night night," she agreed loosening her grip on both of their cheeks. George pulled her hand into his own and pressed soft lips against it before tucking her beneath the blanket.

"I like the name she gave me," Dream whispered grinning with a gentle gaze on the two of them. It flickered from Ashlyn's soft puffed breaths to George's lingering stare. "I love being... I just love her... you"

George reached across the small sea of a three-year-old and caressed Dream's face. He was warm to the touch, well he was always warm. A comfort within crowds, within storms, within a simple breath. He exhaled.

"I know."

"You know," he said kissing George's palm gently. "She knows."

George knew what lingered with the unsaid word of tomorrow, he simply disregarded it for now.

"Go to sleep idiot," George smiled.

Dream scoffed happily, "a weird way of saying you love me, George."

"Sleep."

"I love you too"

"Goodnight, idiot."

"Goodnight, My love."

"Do not drop her!" George yelled after Dream's younger sister. She flashed him a smile and took his baby up to her room. "I mean that Drista!"

"Clay, calm down you're e-dater boyfriend!"

"We're married!" George chuckled with an aggressive wave.

"Same difference!"

"Bye, Dada!" Ashlyn waved vigorously over the other girl's shoulder before they disappeared up

the stairs. He sighed then felt Dream poke his ribs shutting the door behind them.

"Where's my baby?"

George raised a brow, "*my* baby, you mean?"

He poked him again, "whatever, *our* baby. Did my sister take her?"

"The second I walked through the door."

With an award-winning smile, Dream pulled George by the hand towards the kitchen. The first time George visited The house Dream grew up in he'd stayed in the hallway and looked at all of the younger pictures. The ones from his T-ball and soccer phases where both cheeks were plump rather than proportionate. Then George looked and ached a bit at the want he once had, now he only tightened his grip. Dream slotted their fingers and smiled.

In the kitchen, they found his parents fussing over dinner and listening to music as a silence filler. A sweet woman with features kin to Dream's and a gruff man whose smile was another familiar trait.

"Ah!" Dream's mother yelped, running over to hug them both tightly. "Good, you're here! Oh, Nick isn't with you?"

George shook his head, "he's with Karl working on a project in California."

"Aw, well as long as my grandchild is present..." She looked between them until Dream filled in the blank.

"She's upstairs with stink."

His mother waved a hand, "you know she hates when you call her that."

Dream's grin was enough to make George's knees weak. When he leaned against the marble counter the need to swoon was heightened. It wasn't fair, the effortless attractiveness Dream radiated 24/7.

"So, George, how you liken' Florida?" Dream's father called at him through the open window seemingly grilling outdoors.

George leaned over Dream's shoulder and discreetly gripped his ass while saying, "way hotter than England!"

Dream choked on a stolen French fry while his father replied, "Oh that's for sure! Do you grill?"

"No," he dragged his hand up to rest on Dream's waist. "It's Nick's thing. I've never been good at it."

Dream's mother swat the blond man's nervous stealing of fries. George chuckled and inched his hidden hand to the waistband of his jeans. Two fingers traced the skin found beneath his T-shirt.

"No, no," she shooed them out of the kitchen. "Go unpack. Dinner will be ready in an hour!"

"Yeah," Dream's father called from the grill outside the window, "we need time on our masterpiece."

George couldn't stop smiling when Dream pulled him from the door saying, "fine! Bye!"

Down a small hallway, they rounded the corner and George raced past Dream up the stairs knowing he was in trouble. Like teenagers in love, their lofty giggles followed them all the way into Dream's old room. The older man yelped when hands reached his waist to tackle him onto the Minecraft comforter that screamed younger Dream.

"Get off me, you oaf!"

"No," Dream chuckled ghosting his lips over George's own. "You can't just touch me like that and expect me not to react. I want to look at you now."

George flushed, "While you crush me into your middle school bedsheets?"

Dream reached up and swiped stray hair from George's eyes, resting his palm there for a moment. On the cusp of George's cheek, he felt the cold bit of metal press into his flesh representing silent vows of now. Of future. Of them. Lifting his own palms, George snaked them under Dream's t-shirt and pulled him closer. His ring warmed at the touch of Dream's flesh.

"It's been a dream of mine." George rolled his eyes. "What! It was!"

"So you're saying when you were what, fifteen, you could've had enough confidence to talk to me?" Dream nodded but George laughed it off, "I was already in college as well as a partier and not to mention an asshole so I don't... mmm."

He wasn't expecting the kiss but it was still a welcomed engagement. Sighing onto familiar lips George let Dream press his body down flat with his own, the Minecraft sheets rustled beneath them. The thought of it made George chuckle quietly.

"Alright," Dream rolled off of him. "If you're going to laugh like that I'm not kissing you."

Tearing up from full laughter George said, "I'm sorry. But they are Minecraft bedsheets!"

"It's part of our occupation!"

He took in a gasping breath, "yeah. Sure."

Dream dropped his head back onto the bed and tilted his chin to look down at George. His smile was still present from the laughter, blushed a bit from the kiss, he reached over and dug gentle fingers through brown strands. The older man canted into the touch like a needy kitten, exhaling contently.

"Who else will be here?"

"My brother and oldest sister," Dream replied. "He's coming back from summer camp and she's flying in from somewhere with her fiancé."

George nodded before rolling into Dream's side tucking his head beneath a protective chin. The kiss to his collar bone was soft if not entirely sweet, Dream smiled. Tracing hearts over George's shoulder, they laid in comfortable silence for a few moments.

"I remember coming here during that summer." A stray hand played with the hem of Dream's T-shirt while he spoke, kind and lofty, "your mom told me how much you talked about me all the time. I didn't like hearing it then, because of all of our... but I like to think about it now."

"I called my mom on the way to the airport and all she could talk about was how excited she was for *you*." He snorted, "and how she'd have a grandkid."

George groaned hiding his face, "you know I'm mad at you."

"Me! What did I do?"

"You," the words were muffled into a shoulder, "want with me and then I slept with Ashlyn's mother to get back at you."

"I made up for it didn't I?" Looking up George smiled clearly not upset. Dream relaxed his brows and kissed the other's forehead. "I made up for it my love."

"You did, idiot."

The silence came to pass once more. Quiet and healing in the room Dream used to call his own. It didn't last long however, soon Ashlyn came running into the room scream giggling. In pursuit of the tiny toddler was Drista chasing after her. She stopped at the door and made a disgusted face at the two of them snuggled close. George laughed. Dream rolled his eyes.

"Pap! Dada!" Ashlyn clambered towards the bed and gripped George's ankle. "Sta a monster!"

Dream's sister smiled before growling comically, coming over she caught Ashlyn with a giggly scream. Swiping her from the floor she spun then set Ashlyn on the bed with her parents.

"Stink is a monster, baby," Dream sitting up to lean against the headboard. Ashlyn crawled up for a hug immediately.

"Shut up, Clay." It sounded harsh but George caught the fond smile following it. Sibling love was always a harsh matter.

"Sta is nice." Ashlyn nodded looking back at her Drista gave her an encouraging smile.

"How old are you now, Drista?"

She scowled at him, "wouldn't you like to know British boy."

George laughed sitting up against the headboard pressing a shoulder against Dream's, "an asshole, just like you're brother."

Plopping down into the desk chair she grinned, "yet you married him."

George waved her off, "It was for the visa."

"Fuck you," Dream huffed. Fond and annoyed, Ashlyn snapped at him a moment later.

"Bad words, Pap Pap." She shook her head, "no be mean to Dada."

"He was mean first!"

George rolled his eyes and looked back at Dream's sister, "so how bad is the gossip, I know you probably keep up with it."

Her smile turned somber if not worried, "you guys have been trending for the past few months." A heavy pause, "are you going to say anything or talk about..."

Dream kissed Ashlyn's nose, "we will. As soon as we get back home actually. We've made them all wait long enough."

"We have a stream planned."

She nodded right as the doorbell rang. Dream and Drista made eye contact. Silence. Then the next thing they knew they were both shouting another sibling's name.

"It can't be her she just got off the plane thirty minutes ago!"

"I doubt our darling brother is back yet from his hike in the woods."

Dream's sister grimaced, "I don't know why he wanted to go to camp of all places. Leave me here alone with only you as contact other than mom and dad."

"Hey! I'm interesting?"

An eyebrow raised so skeptically that George could only chuckle, "Clay the only thing interesting about you is your shit taste in partners and your e-dater boyfriend."

"Husband," George corrected gladly.

"Same difference."

"Right. And how's your little man, what was his name!"

"He wasn't my man!"

"Looked like it in those homecoming photos!"

"Guys! Your brother is here!" Dream's mom cut off the bickering and George had never been so grateful.

In a way, it felt like rain. If you closed your eyes and imagined standing in the middle of the road or in the middle of a field waiting for the love of your life to rescue you. George used to stand beneath the mechanical spray of water alone and pretend he was waiting for a suitor. Stood in the rain ready for the love of his life to confess every undying emotion to him beneath the cover of clouds and water.

It wasn't required now because water-warmed skin held him careful beneath a real fantasy. Skin bare against the other George leaned into the embrace from behind. Lathering sugar-scented soap between his fingers he spread the bubbles over his arms then down to Dream's around his waist. They didn't have to shower together, it wasn't practical but there was a chance with Ashlyn in the care of Dream's family. Downstairs his baby was giggling and smiling at the newly added part of her life. George sighed.

"I love you." It was said almost absentmindedly. A simple statement. It wasn't a dying confession or a false bravado. The words were the truth, easily familiar and foreign on George's tongue. "Feel like I don't say it to you enough."

"You don't have to," Dream aided him with a pleasant touch to help spread the soap between them. A kiss to his neck, "I see it in the way you smile. And the way you soften those stubborn eyebrows."

George dropped his head back onto Dream's shoulder practically begging him to add more kisses,

"always so observant of me."

"Because I'm in love with you."

George pulled Dream's hand down to caress around his hipbone, "you're insane."

The blond chuckled, "and you're getting turned on. Thought this was supposed to be a sweet soft shower."

"I might have changed my mind."

"George," Dream sighed. Fingertips went against his dismissing tone and traced hearts into the skin below George's navel. "I'd have to be quick we've been gone for ten minutes already."

George moved Dream's hand to where he wanted it, "then get on with it."

Doing as advised Dream stroked his lover softly listening for the soft puffs of air that escaped him. Kisses peppered their way from George's ear to his shoulder following the drip of mimicked raindrops. George whined a little too loud and was rewarded with a hand clasp over his lips. It made him groan pushing back against Dream's growing problem.

He'd never wanted any of it before, maybe two years and a baby ago, but since then this was required. George was content to be alone, had preferred it actually. Satisfied with satisfying himself alone, never a complaint about it, never an out. Now he pushed back to give pleasure while another pushed back. Grinding and gripping at each until other their breaths grew weary and their hearts eradicated resting beats, together. It was so daunting and saving he could hardly fathom it. *Together*. And maybe it was accidentally but it felt like forever.

George was the first to break once again Dream followed a moment later kissing marks onto his pale skin. Breathless, George turned and kissed an equally panting pair of lips. She'd done it to him. She'd left those ugly bruises up and down Dream's neck, now he reclaimed them for his own. Soft unlike the clear teeth marks he used to hide. George painted him mulberry with nothing but breathless kisses of love. Easy and simple. He only left three because he wasn't possessive nor was he greedy. These were for him, no one else.

Dream and Ashlyn lay together dead asleep snoring at each other within Dream's old bedroom. Which meant George could not sleep. He loved them both but investing in a pair of earplugs was serious moving up on the must-buy list. Dream held Ashlyn close and George held Dream, so it didn't feel like a big deal to slip away. Dream felt him stir, of course, muttering something he could not comprehend. But the man settled once more when his lover kissed his temple and whispered an endearment by his ear. The snoring returned.

Downstairs George walked quietly to the kitchen for a glass of water only to find it occupied by Dream's mother.

Spread out before her were picture books. Years and years of lives lived within small snapshots and Polaroids, it reminded George of his grandparents. They used to scrapbook just like this.

"Hello." Dream's mother looked up at him with teary eyes and suddenly he felt guilty for interrupting. "Oh. I'm sorry, I was just... let me leave you to..."

"No," she dismissed beckoning him over instead. Hesitantly he came forward and sat on the stool next to her. A blue book was pushed in front of him a small photo of Dream smiled back at him. "I

have so many pictures of all of them."

George tentatively flipped the page and found another of Dream. Hung upside down on a couch he showed the camera a nerf gun. The same house and the same window just a different colored couch maybe different curtains, George dragged a thumb over the corner of the picture. It had to be a hood decade old if Dream was four as it read next to the photograph.

"He was a pain in my side growing up." Her laugh was quiet, personal. "Just prayed he'd grow up without breaking any bones."

George huffed, "sounds about right."

Dream's mother pulled another book and it had a closer date. With a senior cap and gown, he held his younger sister for a photo. Smiling like an idiot at him through paper.

"This was a bit before he knew you, wasn't it?"

George tilted his head, "believe so. We'd maybe spoken once through this year. A few played games or so." While Dream's mother got up to move around the kitchen. George flipped the page and regretted it. One of Dream's exes looked back at him. Red hair and an innocent look to her grin. He remembered everything about this girl. What Dream would describe as his first real love, real relationship. Listening to him wax on and on about a girl he'd never meet George used to tune him out. That was until she broke his heart. "We... um, we were friends when he was with her."

His mother leaned over to see the photo, she scoffed, "that one. When I made this he begged me to add a photo of them. Told me he was going to marry her."

George frowned and wondered briefly what life would look like if they had stayed together. He didn't like that reality.

"They were a cute couple," George admitted only a little bitter. "Too bad she cheated on him. God, he cried too much about her."

A mug was set before him. The soft aroma of hot chocolate was easily distinguishable, a smile etched out his features. Looked over Dream's mother took her previous seat and squeezed a bottle of whipped cream into her cup offering George some as well. He thanked her quietly.

She sighed, "that was the first person he told me he'd marry."

George snorted into his mug, "how many others were there?"

"Only one." She swallowed thickly and George felt the brush in her tone even out. "After her, there was only one."

George looked over at her and found a very fond expression, it almost hurt to look. It was the same face his own mother gave him when he talked about Ashlyn. Loving.

"It wasn't me."

She laughed, "yes. It was. Although, it was a joke I'll give you that."

George flushed a bit pulling a new book from the stack, "yes, it was always a joke. He didn't..."

"He did," his mother sipped her mug, "sat down with me and his father one night and hashed out whatever was "wrong" with him as he put it. And it was all about you."

"He never said... he never told me any of it was serious."

"I don't think he wanted it to be as serious as it was." She flipped a page, "but it was."

On a new page, George found Dream with his framed tweet showing it off like it was gold. The sun was setting behind him in the same room Dream and Ashlyn now happily snored in. A call opened and muted on his monitors, it felt too realistic. To close to home... George would forever savor knowing the other side of the story.

"And I know you two have a lot to figure out with your jobs, but I just want you to know he loves you. Even if it gets a bit blurry." She nodded, "and all I ask is you love him back. I know you have a baby but I want you to be careful with mine."

George sunk a bit into his seat, "I love him more than I love myself sometimes. Ashlyn comes first but he... he's second. Always."

She puffed her hair away crying once more, "gosh I'm a mess. All my babies are growing up and it's just too much."

Gently he gripped her hand and squeezed as reassurance, "tell me about it. Ashlyn is three and I was already crying at her birthday party."

That tore a laugh out of Dream's mother. Her hand clenching George's she caught her breath and pulled him in for an embrace. George accepted it gratefully pulling away after a moment to say, "I think you would get along with my mother. You have the same ways of thinking."

"I'd love to meet her one day." Rubbing her eyes she said, "now finish your hot chocolate. The whiskey in it is supposed to help you sleep."

"Have you just drugged me?" It was a joke that Dream's mother swat away ushering him to look at more embarrassing baby photos. He was most definitely going to bring them up the next time Dream held something over him.

"Happy birthday, again," George said before he left the kitchen. Dream's mother thanked him and then shooed him upstairs back to his tiny little family.

In the same position as before George slipped back under the covers. With the bit of ease from the whiskey, he tucked in close to Dream's neck. The other man stirred and furrowed a brow.

"Where'd ya go?" A sigh at the arms wrapping around his waist, "smell chocolate mm' did you drink?"

"Your mom made me her homemade hot chocolate. I couldn't sleep."

"Mm. Love you."

"Love you, too."

Chapter End Notes

Aww, it's soft and fluffy and awww lemme walk out before I cry.

Thank you for reading. Take care of yourself ♥

Symphony

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Will you hold me tight and not let go?"

Symphony

Clean Bandit ft. Zara Larsson

It was supposed to be serious. God, George and Dream had hashed out the logistics of this stream for months. Everything blew up with Jade and they'd both withdrawn from social media. The two of them were well off enough not to need the money from streaming so they simply didn't. They simply lived for a while. George never wanted to get married or have an extravagant wedding, if anything he wanted stability. Dream gave him that.

It wasn't hundreds of dollars or a thousand people attending, they married in England. Which took a month in itself to get sorted out. There wasn't a large ceremony, it mostly consisted of George's parents, Ashlyn, and signing a lot of papers. Legally, which was still weird to think about, George was Dream's. In name, in paper, and in his heart. Although George kept his name the same, he gave Ashlyn his as well as Dream's. This made her legal name look even prettier than it already was, extra lengthy and loopy on permanent parchment. Two names and two dads. They were her parents through and through, and she'd never been happier it seemed.

It took another month to get their visa straightened out, but by then everything was shipped over and arriving at their house. When George walked through the threshold in Florida for the third time Sapnap was there to welcome them. He was so relieved the man shed a single tear and George gave him shit for it. The British man couldn't understand the alligator tears but hugged him tight anyways. They spent a good two weeks breathing in the air as newlyweds and acting the same as before they were bound in matrimony. George's new favorite game involved Sapnap and his lack of knowledge with what went on behind closed doors and during Ashlyn's nap times.

After hearing all his grievances a few months prior, George was all for keeping his promise to fix them as time went on.

"On the floor in front of our mirror," George said offhandedly in the kitchen that morning. Dream and Ashlyn were still asleep in what was now his and Dream's bedroom. On a Sunday evening, the three of them gutted George's old room and painted it a pretty shade of lavender. Now it contained toys and a four-poster princess bed Ashlyn would soon be big enough to sleep in without so many cautionary pillows. It felt like what England couldn't. George always felt something was missing in his apartment but being here righted all the wrongs.

Sapnap stopped mid-bite of his eggs and raised a confused brow, "what?"

Stirring sugar into his tea George said, "it's a grievance of yours right? To know when I fuck our best friend while you're in the house."

George watched with menacing satisfaction as his friend turned beat red and sputtered. Gaggling at him like he was a sour note, George couldn't help but egg it on, "I believe you were asleep on the couch after an all-nighter. Ashlyn was sleeping in her room so Dream pulled me in. He was so desperate when I tripped onto the ground he kept me there-"

"La la la la no I don't want to fucking hear this ahhhhh"

"And wouldn't let me-" Sarnap stood practically scandalized "-Until I looked at him in the mirror while he-"

"That's it! I'm moving out!" Storming out of the kitchen Sarnap took his plate up to his room. Brushing past a sleep-ruffled Dream holding Ashlyn in his arms, George laughed at his dramatic exit.

"What's wrong with him?" Dream easily kissed George's temple and set Ashlyn on the counter.

George shrugged innocently. Despite the small snippets of information Sarnap didn't want to move out and the three of them didn't encourage it. He was talking about moving in with Karl but being Ashlyn's honorary cool uncle seemed to keep him grounded to Floridian soil.

"George?" Dream's odd voice pulled him back to reality. They were streaming in front of four-hundred-thousand people and all he could muster to say was a laugh. "I... why are you laughing?"

He rested his head against the gaming chair and looked down at Ashlyn. She was playing a game on his phone while they did this, completely unfazed. Still, too young to understand followers and content and anything to do with their quiet fame, Ashlyn hummed and sat still. George took in a deep breath and said, "they are all here to see if it's true. If you're a cheater and I'm a homewrecker. Well..."

"Sort of but... they want to know if Jade was..."

"They are going to believe whatever they want," George said looking at how fast the chat was going. "Isn't that right chat?"

Dream sighed, "you're not wrong."

"I'm not." He sat up and shifted Ashlyn in his lap. "So, chat, here's the truth. Either you can take it and believe it or disregard it like I know a lot of you will anyway." A heavy pause. "I came to the U. S. Almost four years ago and... well there I had an accident. I made a mistake and I'm not here to apologize for it, nor will I explain it further than this." George poked Ashlyn in the side and made her look up, "baby, who am I?"

She tilted her head and raised a brow as if he'd gone mad, "you're Dada, duh."

George grinned and kissed her cheek, "And who's that?"

Dream leaned against the desk with a smug grin shining back at him. Warm and familiar George was happy to look at him. Content as ever to be with him. Ashlyn smiled and plopped her head to the side shaking her pigtails.

"Pap pap," she giggled at the sudden rewarded affection Dream gave her. "Other Dada."

George ignored every comment of the speeding chat and said, "the only thing true to Jade's post was that. Yes, Ashlyn is mine. I'm her biological father. But the rest is open for interpretation. I came here for Christmas because Dream begged..."

"I did not beg-"

"He begged me to come visit him. I had not had any contact with him or Sarnap or any of my other friends since Ashlyn was born." George looked to Dream and allowed him to finish off the rest of

his story.

"George knew I had a girlfriend." George scoffed at that and Dream flicked his ear. Ashlyn was back to playing bubble pop on George's phone and being very well behaved. He kissed her forehead. "But at no point did he make a move on me," an embarrassed hand covered his neck, "I might have made one on him. Just...because I don't want to disclose anyone else's personal life like someone we know..."

George fake coughed, "Jade. Proceed."

Dream sent him a dopey smile that was definitely going to be clipped and put everywhere. It made his heart melt like butter in the summer sun.

"Our relationship wasn't healthy and being... with others? It... it wasn't a bad thing."

Before the stream Dream was extremely nervous, as he was for most of his streams. Especially when it involved serious topics and his personal life, George was just so fed up with speculation he was ready to scream the story at people. Dream stammering over his words made George grip his hand and squeeze softly. Because despite whatever the stream said, they would still have this. The internet or their reputation wasn't going to take that away. He listened to his lover take a deep breath, "so, we didn't work out. None of it was George's fault, or Ashlyn's. We simply didn't match and that's alright. I wish her the best."

George picked up the ending of the story, "so then he showed up and handed me a ring like an idiot-"

"You excepted the proposal!"

"-and now I'm permanently in Florida and Ashlyn has two dads. Any questions?"

Chat sped up faster and faster but George ignored it. He wasn't going to answer any of those questions it was rhetorical.

"Seriously, guys," Dream huffed after a moment. "We just want to put all this drama to rest, alright? You know the story now, and whether you want to cancel us over it or not, we are both happy. As a courtesy keep Ashlyn out of any Twitter bullshit and all that, we never wanted her in the spotlight."

George sighed, "but that was taken out of our hands. That's all we really wanted to say, Dream?"

That familiar grin etched his lips while he pulled the microphone closer, "chat. He *married me*."

"Alright, that's enough-"

"He has to be my valentine now, this is the year chat we-"

"Bye!" George ripped the microphone from his grimy hands and spoke directly into it. "We'll stream again at some point."

"Baby," Dream chuckled pulling Ashlyn up to look at the camera. "Say bye-bye!"

She waved and blew little kisses, "bye-bye!"

The screen when dark and George slid dramatically into his chair. That was it. It was done. Settled. He breathed without the weight holding his shoulders down. Dream took a breath as well

hugging Ashlyn sweetly. George tilted his head at them.

"Could've gone worse."

"Worse than us sitting in silence for five minutes."

George grimaced, "Yeah, could've gone worse."

House parties weren't necessarily a common occurrence anymore, but Sapnap begged for a month straight. George gave in because he'd tortured the poor soul with his and Dream's bedroom adventures. Dream gave in because he was easily guilt-tripped when it came to Sapnap.

So at the end of June when the Florida air was simmering they had a pool party. Sapnap invited Karl, who invited Quackity, and by the time they set out pool noodles, the house was full of a large group of their friends.

"Ashlyn!" George chased the toddler down and swooped her from the grass, "I have to put sunscreen on you."

"No! Play Dada!"

"Hey, hey," George pulled her up and set her easily on the backyard table. "You can play as soon as I'm done. Okay?"

"Ugh," she went limp as if it would deter George from the notion altogether. It actually made everything ten times easier as he could just lather her with sunscreen and set her back on the pool pavement. "All done?"

"All done, be careful and tell Sapnap that-"

"Bye-bye, Dada!"

George sighed and watched his baby toddle off to Quackity and Sapnap lounged in the deep end of the pool. Ashlyn had a floaty that connected around her waist and arms, yet when she jumped into the pool George still felt his heart clench. Sapnap welcomed her and spun them around to splash Quackity in the face. He shook his head and sipped on some mixed drink Dream had made at some point.

"Hello, stranger!"

George jumped and caught Wilbur grinning like a snake. He immediately pulled the other man in for a side embrace and chuckled in surprise.

"Wilbur! I'm glad you guys could make it!"

He waved George off, "I already had a Lovejoy thing but then Tommy begged me to bring him with me. Then Tubbo came along, so now you've got half the Dream Smp at your house. And then some."

"I saw Phil earlier," George smiled. "Happy you guys could all come."

"Just don't let him find the tequila."

It was easier to laugh now. For the first time, he was in Wilbur's presence and he wasn't wasted

nor did he want to be. George simply basked in the happiness around him smiling like a dumbass. Wilbur noticed because he always did.

"I'm glad you're happy here," his friend nodded, "and Ashlyn's very cheery. You did good man."

"Thanks," George nodded. Opening his mouth to speak again he was cut off.

"I think I did good." Dream pressed his cheek against George's and said, "isn't that right, my love."

George rolled his eyes and pushed Dream's face away, "you're an idiot."

"And I think that's my cue." Wilbur's smile was quiet but it felt genuine to George. He nodded along, "see you later."

Watching Wilbur leave into the little crowd was bittersweet. He'd always be a friend but it'd never be the same as it was in England. George didn't know if that was a happy thought or a sad one, he just let it lie and drift off into the rest of his past.

"Tommy is going to corrupt her." Dream laughed. A fancy frozen drink made its way into George's hands while Dream wrapped arms around his waist. Holding him close under the shade of the backyard oak tree. It was green with life and swayed in the warm breeze of summer.

Leaning into the soft hold of his love, he said, "she'll know an array of curse words by the end of it."

"Lovely." The kisses on his cheek were welcomed and harbored close to his heart. Dream was his and no one stood in the way of that. Not distance nor a pretty face well... that was before Sapnap started whistling at them.

"Not on the table!" George laughed with his eyes closed. "Gerge, don't you dare! I'll add a grievance!"

"Alright, alright!" George pulled Dream from behind him and started walking to the poolside.

"Grievance?" Dream hooked their fingers together with ease. George hid a blush beneath soft upturned lips.

"He was upset that we..."

A brow raised in question, "that we?"

George felt smug, "did it in the shower while he was in the house."

Dream's face flushed heavily, "oh?"

"So, I now tell him every time we... and he's very crass about it."

"Well, I wonder why?" His tone was flat and his face scrunched with a sour expression. George loved every inch of its perfect presentation. From Dream's loose hung tank top and freckled shoulders, George had a right to silently swoon.

George turned his husband's cheek back for attention and kissed him softly, "I love you."

Dream physically melted into George's touch at the phrase, "I love you more."

"I..."

The splash of water was unexpected. One minute they were whispering endearments the next they were drenched to the bone with pool water. The distinct smell of chlorine was bound to stick to George's clothes even after a good wash, not to mention his hair drooping under heavy water. Dream laughed and turned his head to the offenders.

"Get a room, bozos!" Karl giggle and brought everyone else into applause.

"I hate all this DNF shit!" Quackity was reprimanded by not only Ashlyn but Bad as well. He sat with his legs dipped into the pool drinking a glass of lemonade.

"Eh! Dream!" Tommy started before Tubbo tackled him into the pool. More water splashed the un-water ready couple.

George lost his patience and pulled Dream into another kiss. The younger man welcomed it and let George walk him backward. Step by careful step he heard the protests of affection. Dream didn't understand the notion until George pushed him over the edge and watched him splash into the pool. Arms flailing in the air like a fallen creature, Dream smacked unceremoniously into the water.

"You're an ass." He yelled coughing up a lung full of pool water. The summery smile was hard to miss amongst the pretty features.

George reached his hand out, "I know."

Dream pulled him in a moment later.

"Ashlyn, you need to sleep in your own bed."

Ashlyn ignored George's complaint, turning over and curling up In his and Dream's bed ready to go to sleep. Her hair was still wet from the bath she'd taken prior, and it was making George's favorite pillow damp. She was a stubborn one as time grew. When Ashlyn made up her mind about something she was going to do it or all hell would break loose.

"Little Ashy Ash," Dream cooed already giving in to her little pout. "Don't you wanna be a big girl and sleep in your princess bed?"

"Big girl morrow," Ashlyn said. "Baby now."

George wanted to shed a tear, sob, hit rock bottom because he loved her so much. They'd come a long way from isolated birthdays and a quiet apartment. Now the house felt alive with the few lingering friends in the living room. Sapnap called it a sleepover with Karl and Quackity, George and Dream weren't so sure. Ashlyn blinked at him with those pretty green eyes and suddenly he was first to give in.

"Okay." Sliding into the bed defeated, George opened his arms and welcomed Ashlyn in for a soft cuddle. "Big girl tomorrow."

Dream flicked off the lights and came in to complete their little family circle.

"Story," Ashlyn asked quietly.

In a hushed tone, Dream questioned, "Which one?"

"How we get here." It was a story about a prince and some time travel Dream told her once, Ashlyn never forgot it. Still hasn't.

George easily found a joke in the matter, "Accidentally."

"Oh," Ashlyn said absentmindedly, almost entirely forgetting about her story. "How long we stay here, Dada?"

George closed his eyes when Dream moved closer. Breath brushing over his eyes before the kiss came down in a gentle moment. It was chaste between his eyebrows, loving, final. He placed the same one on Ashlyn's temple.

George answered, "Forever."

"Ever," she agreed. "Story?"

Dream smiled, "a long time ago there was a prince..."

Chapter End Notes

R-roll credits 🙏

Thank you so much for reading. I hope you all enjoyed Ashlyn and Dream and George's little family as much as I did writing it. You are all lovely and amazing and I cannot thank you enough for all the support on this story.

There is an epilogue for this so be on the lookout soon.

Also I have a Fanfiction discussions discord (even tho I'm very new to discord) so if you want to join that and either tell me what I'm doing wrong or just come chat here's the link?

<https://discord.gg/cfkAMkUt>

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"In this world it's just us"

As it was

Harry Styles

Her room changed as she did. Princesses and butterflies to records and Chanel perfume she'd received for Christmas. George tried not to dwell on the time passing of his baby growing up, but sometimes it was hard when he looked at her and couldn't find those chubby cheeks anymore. Or the childish giggled at his lack of correct grammar.

George ran his fingers over Ashlyn's dresser. It filled the space after her toy box was no longer used, a small void left but never vacant. Pictures of her friends were framed on the right. The age of ten with the curly red headed boy she swore was her best friend forever. They met in kindergarten and kept the same class by chance up until freshman year of high school. George could feel his age as he bent down to pick up a stray shirt Ashlyn dropped on her way to dance class. Thirty six was old in his mind, at least his knees and back were feeling the number.

The walls were still lavender but the butterflies were now replaced with vintage records. It was a cold winter evening when four of them went to a thrift store looking for second hand yard supplies. He could still see the light in Ashlyn's eyes when she came across a box of vintage vinyl records. From the bed George watched Dream and Ashlyn run them over a record player to see which ones still worked. It was Sapnap's idea to mount the ones that didn't sound to the wall.

The front door of the house closed and George took a seat on Ashlyn's bed. A well loved bear rested in between the pillows of her perfectly made bed. Roni was his name. He was the protector of thunderstorms and monsters beneath her bed, George suddenly felt choked up.

"Oh, dad? What," Ashlyn looked around. "What are you doing?"

She was beautiful, that was the bottom line. Though her hair was brown as his own her eyes were a radiant green, wild beneath long eyelashes. George used to see her mother but as the years past all he could see was himself and fragments of Dream. Even if he wasn't her biological parent, she had his smile and the same form of laughter.

George looked down at the bear in his hands and tried to remember what he'd come in the room for in the first place. "I think I came in here to see if the other dance outfit thing made it out of the wash. Sapnap did the laundry."

"Oh," her brows furrowed while she moved to dig in her drawer. "Yep! And look it's not pink, he did it right."

Movement in the hallway caught George's attention. Dream was typing something on his phone while Ashlyn set down her bag and started taking off her shoes.

"Did your dad learn anything this time?"

Ashlyn snorted, "he kept stepping on my toes because he has two left feet."

George couldn't help but laugh, "what's he so invested in on his phone?"

"I dunno," Ashlyn shrugged. "I think it's about your birthday present... oh sh- I mean crap, I didn't mean to tell you that."

"One, watch your language," George frowned. "Two, you better spill right now. What is it?"

Ashlyn opened her mouth right when Dream came in.

"Nope zip! You promised you wouldn't say anything!"

"Ugh," Ashlyn sprawled herself onto the ground dramatically. "Fine!"

George welcomed the small kiss on his lips when Dream took a seat next to him on Ashlyn's bed. She grumbled from her recline on the floor and covered her eyes with an arm.

He huffed, "how was father daughter class?"

"Terrible," Dream muttered. "I suck at it, and besides I think you should've done it."

"Dad did it for the last three years Pap," Ashlyn reminded, "You can't avoid it forever."

"But he's your *real* dad," Dream tried.

Sitting up she gave Dream death brows. Eyes squinted into slits and her nose scrunched with pure determination, "and you aren't?"

Ashlyn's accent stayed British despite Sapnap's attempt at corrupting her to have a Southern/Floridian tone. It was only small words that George caught were successful in his attempts. Usually, when she was very serious or angry her 'T's were more pronounced as well as her 'C's.

"Well," Dream scoffed. "I am too I suppose... but you have his DNA not mine!"

"So," she drawled. "You raised me. You're my mom in this situation, right?"

"No!" Dream basically shrieked. "That would be George, not-"

"Why do I have to be the mom!" George said, "you're the one that cooks, I think-"

"No, no," Dream shook his head. "You aren't winning this argument I think-"

"I think!" Ashlyn said louder. Tossing both of them a ballet shoe, "you are both idiots."

"Hey!" They answered simultaneously.

Ashlyn laughed softly before raising a questioning brow.

"Since we are on the topic..." George didn't like the sound of that starter. "My biological mother, why have you guys never told me about her?"

The silence was explanation enough but George felt guilty. Scratching at his neck he looked to Dream for saving. His features were older now but the man had aged like fine wine. Soft around the cheekbones with a few stress wrinkles on his forehead. George often like to smooth them over in bed and tease him about growing ancient. The reply would always be a jab at his superior age. Dream shrugged helplessly. Unhelpful idiot.

"Mostly because I haven't talked to her since you were a baby." George finally said, Dream rested a palm on his knee for support. Ashlyn wasn't asking to be cruel, just her facial expressions alone told them it was innocent curiosity. "Why the sudden interest?"

She shrugged, "I don't know. I just wonder sometimes."

Dream gripped his knee again before saying, "Admittedly, we didn't know her all that well. I think, if you want to, one day you can meet her or speak to her..."

Ashlyn frowned immediately, the bridge of her nose scrunching in distaste, "no. I don't really want to do that. I was just curious if I actually had one or if Sapnap was messing with me."

George rolled his eyes again, "what'd he tell you?"

"That you guys made me in a lab like the power puff girls." The deadpan in her voice told them just how much she believed him, which was not at all. "But he's kind of stupid and I didn't believe him."

Dream stifled a wheeze, "you know I'll give him credit for the imagination... ow! George!" He gripped his assaulted shoulder.

George rubbed over his now sore knuckles and turned back to Ashlyn, "no, baby. You were not made in a lab."

"More like a party," Sapnap stuck his head into the room and grinned. "Dream was ignoring your Dad, so your Dad got very drunk and-"

"Sapnap!" The two of them nearly shouted. The younger man held his hands up in surrender while Ashlyn laughed as background noise. George was quick reprimand, "too much detail."

"Hey, I was just giving her the truth! She knows more than you think she does."

Three pairs of eyes shot over to the child before she scoffed, it sounded kin to Dream's annoyance, "I do not!"

"Liar." Sapnap sauntered in and plopped down on the floor with Ashlyn. She shoved him over. "Dream used to be very stupid when it came to your Dad."

"Still is sometimes," George grinned. Dream rested his chin on his smaller shoulder and pouted up at him. "Don't look at me like that."

"But George, I love you."

"Yeah, yeah."

Ashlyn shot a look to Sapnap and he returned the favor. Brows raised to her pulled back hair line she flopped her head to the side and shook her ponytail. Sapnap made a snorting kind of sound.

He said, "at least I'm not alone to suffer their disgusting little love thing anymore. Right Ashlyn, you get to suffer with your uncle Sapnap."

"I have to suffer from your presence, you mean?"

Dream took in a delighted breath near George's ear. He was always far too enthusiastic when Ashlyn had a rude comeback or remark.

Sapnap whined in shock, "Dream! Your child is being mean to me!"

"I am not!"

Dream was too busy wrapping his arms around George's midsection to pay attention after the initial blow, so Sapnap moved on to the next best thing. "Gerge, your offspring is being rude."

Ashlyn smacked him with a tan jazz shoe whilst George leaned back onto Dream's touch, "maybe start by calling her by her name."

"You little brat, I will bury you in our back yard!"

"No, you won't!" She rolled her eyes, "cause then you'd have to suffer my parents alone!"

Sapnap paused and groaned, "Shit you're right."

"I'm always right." She sounded so much like George, Dream whispered about it in his ear. Sapnap gagged at their affectionate display.

"Did you bring in the bag of cookies from the store?" Dream questioned their daughter. She looked confused for a fleeting moment before remembering. Eyes lit up like fireworks, she moved.

"No, I didn't!" She hopped up so fast it made George's knees hurt just watching. "Come on, Nick. Get your lazy ass- butt up!"

"Language," George said although the efforts were definitely in vain.

Sapnap huffed, "why are you calling me Nick, little brat?"

"You call me that, I'll call you Nick." Once he stood up she started shoving Sapnap down the hallway yelling, "move or I'll tell Karl you like him!"

"You wouldn't fucking dare!"

"Move your annoying ass!"

George dropped back onto Dream's shoulder and sighed, "you bought cookies?"

"Yeah," soft kisses littered the line of George's jaw. "And seasonings for dinner. We were already out and Ashlyn was excited to go, even after dance class."

He nodded resting his forehead on Dream's temple, "she's asking about her mother. What if one day she changes her mind and wants to see her?"

"I don't know," was Dream's honest answer. "I guess we'll come across that bridge when it happens. She doesn't seem to want to." He swept a stray hair from George's eyes, "don't worry about it now, my love."

George scoffed, "she's growing up so fast I can't keep up."

"You know what she told me in the car?"

"Do I want to know?" Usually when Dream didn't immediately start with the subject it was touchy. A lot of fights had been born from this form of prolonged avoidance.

He could tell what George was thinking having been together so long, "nothing bad, just more of

her growing up."

"What?"

"She asked me not to tell you but she got asked to the winter formal." Dream pulled back to smile because he knew George would have a abhorrent reaction. "Oh, come on I thought it was sweet."

"Yeah unless she said yes, then it's not sweet anymore."

Dream showed his different opinion by shooing George's cheek away, "you're being overprotective again."

"I'm not." The scoff was final, "she's not going."

Dream frowned, "George..."

"No."

A heavy sigh filled the silence of the room, "this is why she didn't tell you, you know. She knew you'd have a bad reaction."

George shook his head and stood up, "she told you because she knows you're a pushover."

Dream's expression hardened, "no, she told me because she was *scared* to tell you. She said you'd freak out about it even if she didn't want to go, and you're proving her point."

"Whatever, she's not going."

"I think it should be her choice," Dream reasoned. "She's old enough-"

"Well, I'm saying no." George didn't want to fight with Dream but somehow he was feeling on edge more than usual. And it was all because of Ashlyn, he didn't want to admit it but lately time was going too fast.

"You can't just make that decision it's-"

George scoffed with an arrogant stance, "yeah I can. I'm her father."

"So am I," Dream challenged.

It slipped out without real meaning behind it but George had immediate regret, "I'm her *real* father."

He hadn't seen that type of hurt flash Dream's face before, nor had he ever had such a silent reaction. George was frozen by his own hateful words as he watched Dream look away from him. Though the statement was biologically true, it didn't mean anything when Dream had been there the entire time.

"Dream, I didn't-"

"Low blow, George," Dream stood avoiding all eye contact, "you're right though. Sorry for interrupting your independent parenting with my civil opinion."

Walking out of the room George tried to stop him but Dream waved him off.

George felt like a terrible person. So much so he had a pillow and a blanket on the couch and told himself he was never going back upstairs. Going up meant facing Dream and that seemed to be a hard task after he replayed their fight in his head. Their marriage wasn't perfect, they had fights, scream matches, there were even times when Sapnap had to step in and smack them out of their idiotic state of minds. Yet it had never been this bad, they didn't speak at dinner and everyone noticed. Sapnap had his brows to the ceiling and Ashlyn was so confused it showed very blatantly on her face.

Anytime she asked Dream a question he redirected it with, "you should ask your Dad." George knew it was jab at him for his mindless need to win an argument but it still stung. So there he was sulking in the living room far past the time he usually went to bed. If he didn't go to bed soon he'd feel like shit waking up at dawn to get Ashlyn up for school but he couldn't bring himself to face Dream.

"Pap said you were down here being stubborn." Ashlyn crossed her arms and leaned over the back of the couch. The cushion scrunched behind George's head causing a deeper frown.

"You're still up?"

"Yeah, so are you. Your point?"

George bristled, "don't be rude."

"What did you fight about this time?"

Ashlyn came round and plopped herself next to George. She was comfy in the Minecraft pajamas Quackity bought her last Christmas. A matching shirt and pants that George found awfully cheesy, she loved them all the same. Quackity, as the time went on, seemed to have grown a liking to Ashlyn, despite his hate of children. He spoiled her the most when he visited which resulted in them teaming up against her parents and causing way too much turmoil.

He huffed at her, "nothing."

"Not what Pap said."

"What *did* Dream say?"

Ashlyn canted her head and stole the other half of George's designated sulking blanket, "he said you think I'm growing up too fast and it makes you sad."

George now felt even worse because Dream knew his outburst wasn't about who the real parent was. He knew why George was freaking out on him, he knew George. He figured Dream knew him better than he knew himself, it only made everything hurt a bit more. The ache beneath his ribs was almost as unbearable as the lump in his throat.

"Well," George said dryly. "He has a lot of opinions."

Ashlyn's tone was softer, "I think he's right. You do know I'm only fifteen right?"

"Yeah," he sighed glancing at her. "What's your point?"

"It's not like I'm grown and leaving the house tomorrow," she was so logical it made George bittersweet. "So, I don't know why you're *just now* upset, neither does Pap."

George shrugged, "I don't know either, baby. I'm sorry, I don't mean to make it hard on you two."

I'm just..." he fixed the stray hair on Ashlyn's head. "I don't like change."

She snorted and snuggled up into his side. Hugging her Dad around the waist she said, "we know you don't. Did we forget the kitchen remodeling incident?"

George pulled a face and sifted fingers through Ashlyn's hair. It was cut recently long curtain bangs framed her face while the rest met her shoulder.

"Shut up, you have to admit it was sad to see the tile go."

"You're so weird."

He remembered that day vividly. The kitchen needed to be remodeled whether he liked it or not as they had found termites starting to nest in the kitchen wall. George thought he was fine seeing them gut it but something snapped and he just felt sick about it. A few tears were shed over absolutely nothing other than the poor tile. It was silly really, like crying over spilt milk.

"So," Ashlyn started her meddling again, "what did you say to Pap to make him look all sad like that?"

George winced, "you'll hate me too if I tell you."

"Promise I won't."

The sigh felt extremely heavy, "he didn't agree with my opinion on something with you and..."

"And?"

"And I won the fight by saying I was your real father and he wasn't."

The silence was so loud George's ears rung. Ashlyn pulled away to look at him. Incredulous and shocked, she raised her brows in a familiar manor to how he would. George shut his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose.

"You're such an asshole," she didn't even try to cover her language and George didn't reprimand her for it either.

"I'm... yeah I'm an asshole." As he admitted it Ashlyn seemed to find it amusing. "Stop laughing. It's not funny! Ashlyn! I'm a terrible person and you are laughing at me."

She doubled over and fell onto George's lap looking up at him with shaking shoulders he pouted down at her. Poking her side to make her stop she finally took a breath.

"You suck, Dad."

"Yes, I know." George groaned, "it's why I have exiled myself to the couch. You're Pap is never gonna forgive me."

With a shake of her head she explained, "he loves you. He'll forgive you."

A gentle squeeze to her nose made Ashlyn swat her father's hand away, "I don't forgive myself. That's the worst thing I've ever said to him."

The room fell quiet once more. Soft in the emptiness of their house. If he listened hard enough he could almost hear Sappnap shouting in the other room, but it was so muffled he doubted it was there at all.

"You do know he's just as much my *real* dad as you are right?" George tilted his head considering. "Just because I have *your* DNA doesn't mean you're immediately my parent."

"Yes, Ashlyn, it kind of does."

Shaking her head she squeezed his hand, "I have a mother somewhere, but she'll never be my mom. She wasn't here, she didn't raise me, she's not my parent. But Dream, Pap, was here, he raised me, he's my real dad. My parent just as much as you are."

George was stunned to silence for a moment. She must have thought about this more than he anticipated. Considering she mentioned her mother, she had to have thoroughly thought about it as she was completely right. A bit of guilt pulled on his heartstrings when he looked down at her.

"Does it make you sad that you don't have a mom?"

Ashlyn snorted, "no, having two dads is great. Though it was hard when my period hit and you two looked at me like I was an alien."

"Yeah, we weren't the most prepared for that..." Ashlyn found this extremely funny and chuckled. "But you're sure, you don't feel like cheated out of life or something?"

"No, Dad," her pretty green eyes rolled, "I'm not upset you didn't marry a girl and give me a mom. I wouldn't replace Pap with anyone."

"Okay," George muttered. "Yeah, I wouldn't replace him either... I think he wants to replace me right now though."

She huffed impatiently and said, "You guys are so dramatic sometimes, what did you even fight about."

George ran a thumb over Ashlyn's terse brow, "you getting asked to the winter formal."

Both eyes shut as she winced, "he wasn't supposed to tell you."

"Why didn't you *want* to tell me?"

Ashlyn paused for a moment thinking it over. George let her have the time and pet sweetly over her forehead like he did when she was younger. Back when a moment like this she would've been asleep within seconds. She seemed to come to a dead end and said, "I don't know."

"Dream said you were scared to tell me." He lowered his voice a little, masking his hurt, "are you scared to talk to me about stuff like that?"

"It's not exactly scared," she explained, "I just know you freak out a little too much about things like that."

George held his scoff in, "I know I do."

"I was going to tell you," Ashlyn reassured poking his pouted cheek. "But I wanted to decide if I even wanted to go or not. I mean if I can go."

The inside of his cheek met with teeth. George wanted to say no but, as he knew earlier, Dream was correct. Ashlyn was old enough to go. It was merely George's protective parenting causing issues.

"Don't make that face," Ashlyn huffed. "You look constipated, if I can't go just say that."

"You can go," he finally said, reluctantly. "But I wanna know who you're going with before hand. Ask them to come here and take pictures or something first." She smiled valiantly and George asked another question eating at his heart, "you like him more, huh?"

"Who?"

"Pap, Dream, you like him more than me."

This made her laugh again, "really? You're really asking me that?"

George sputtered, "what it's a valid-"

A hand came up to press against her own forehead, "Dad, I don't have a favorite parent. I love you both equally. Besides you are completely different why would I pick a favorite?"

He already knew the answer so George opt to sigh and looked around. It was completely dark in the living room, only the kitchen light left on, he hadn't even bother to turn the TV on for background noise. Ashlyn groaned and George glanced at her wondering what she was pouting about. He raised a brow.

"Can you carry me upstairs, I don't feel like walking."

"Ashlyn," he deadpanned. "No offense but you weigh way more than you did at the age of six. You'd probably have more luck carrying me upstairs."

"Ugh," she sat up and tilted her head, "what about a piggyback ride?"

"Ashlyn-"

"Oh, come on. Please!" George's hand was tugged upward until he stood, "I want compensation for my marriage counseling."

"Compensation! You are a little pain in the-"

"Please!"

He gave in because maybe he was the real pushover, "fine, come on."

Climbing up George's back Ashlyn gripped around his neck while he gently held the back of her knees. She was a medium height for her age, he feared she'd never grow a few years ago. Always smaller than everyone else in her class, it wasn't until recently she hit a growing spurt and met George's height. He was out of breath halfway up the staircase and Ashlyn found it extremely funny laughing over his shoulder like a maniac.

"You're cruel," he complained.

"You love me anyway."

A puff of air, "yes, I do."

She kissed his cheek, "I love you too, Dad."

That warmed his heart and washed away anything else he'd been worried about. So, without thinking he walked straight into his and Dream's room and stopped dead in his tracks.

Leaning against the headboard on his phone was Dream, gorgeous as ever and clearly pissed off.

Both brows pinched while he aggressively swiped through something as if it was inconvenient. It wasn't until then that he remembered why he exiled himself to the couch. Dream spared them a glance and return to his phone a second later. Not even an acknowledgment.

George ached and turned to bring Ashlyn to her room before she stopped him.

"Wait," she let go and slid down George's back to go to Dream. "Love you, goodnight."

Dream welcomed the embrace, "goodnight, baby, love you too."

She squinted at George then Dream as she walked towards the door, muttering a very aggressive, "talk." Then the door shut and George was left standing in the middle of the room guilty like a criminal. Dream still didn't spare him a glance.

Apologies were hard for someone that didn't like being wrong, so it was a big deal to stand there and debate the words. When they fought Dream usually gave in first and called for a cease fire even if it was George's wrong doing. It was something George loved and hated about Dream, how kind hearted he was. It only made his own terrible attitude worse when he used it on Dream.

"I'm sorry," George said eventually. "I didn't mean what I said earlier..."

"Cool." It stung but he took it for what it was and stepped back.

Seemingly dismissed, George nodded and left for the door again. The couch it was, at least it met his eyes when he looked at it. With a hand on the knob he turned the door before Dream said something to him, "that wasn't a very good apology, you didn't even try."

"You're like Ashlyn, once you've made up your mind you don't change it," George shrugged looking over his shoulder. "I can't apologize enough to make up for what I said."

"You could've tried a little harder," the soften tone of his voice made George swallow the lump in his throat.

It came out as a broken whisper, "I'm sorry."

"Are you? Or are you saying it because you don't want to fight?"

He left the door and turned to look at the other man, "I don't want to fight. I never want to fight, but that's not why I'm apologizing."

"It isn't?" The phone was now flat on his chest and his eyes were fixated on George's now. Green and alive and clearly hurt. That seemed to burn more than the dismissal. "Then why, because you clearly think you are the only *real* parent in this room."

"I'm sorry," he grit. The tears were going to come whether he wanted them to or not but he still fought them. Swallowing a blinking heavy at the bed, George said, "that was a shit thing to say, I know. I only said it because I thought... I don't know what I thought. That Ashlyn likes you more or just doesn't want to tell me stuff anymore because I..." the shrug felt helpless. He'd rather go back to the couch than blubber like a seal in from of an upset Dream. "I feel like a terrible Dad sometimes okay? I don't know... never mind. I'm sleeping downstairs anyways so don't-"

"My love." Lovely like a caress the endearment ripped him to pieces, he fell apart then. Silently, looking anywhere but at Dream because he wasn't going to cry in front of him. "Come here."

"No, I..."

"Please."

Coaxed with soft words, George crawled over their shared bedsheets and laid on his side. Facing away from his lover he took in stuttered breaths. Dream placed a hand over his hair and sifted through it.

"She doesn't have a favorite," Dream said eventually.

"I know."

"You're a good parent."

"And you're her real dad," George exhaled leaning into the soft touch. "M'sorry I said that to you, it's the worst thing I've ever..."

Shuffling behind him Dream's warm arm wrapped around his midsection and held him close. Back to chest, face to neck, Dream kissed below his ear.

"I've said pretty terrible things to you too," he whispered. "I know you didn't mean-"

"No." A hasty hand gripped Dream's, "no, I didn't mean it. And if I did Ashlyn doesn't think that. I don't think that."

"Good," another kiss landed on his cheek.

George turned in Dream's arms and pressed his lips lightly on the other. A bit of tears mixing into the kiss. They exhaled together, all of their tension seeping out with apologies and understanding.

"I'm sorry."

"I forgive you."

He pressed his forehead to Dream's chest and took another breath.

"You're kind of an ass though."

George smiled, "I know."

"Happy birthday dear George- Dad- Gerge! Happy birthday to you!"

Blowing out the candles on his cake George smiled at the small flashes of cameras around the table. Karl flew in for business and conveniently took a day to come see George on his birthday. At least that's what he told everyone, George knew he was really there to kiss Sapnap behind closed doors and then act like nothing happened. Their relationship, if you could call it that, was still developing.

"Woo! You're ancient!" Karl clapped George on the shoulder as if he wasn't two years away from it himself.

"Fuck off." Taking his handmade Karl birthday card, he smiled like an idiot and thanked his friend for the vintage playing card sandwiched between the paper. Sapnap handed him a gift card to his favorite restaurant and then basically pulled Karl away by his collar. He could only roll his eyes at the two.

"Open mine," Ashlyn piped in handing him a blue box. It was about a foot wide and a foot tall and almost ten pounds. A little sticker on top read *fragile*. George grinned at her.

"Oh!" Opening the gift he found a ceramic vase. Painted like a sunset with three abstract people in the scenery. "Ashlyn, did you make this?"

"Yeah, in art class!" She smiled fully at him and he felt his heart melt. "I hope you like it I spent a while on it."

George pulled her in to an embrace, "I love it. Thank you. We'll put it on the kitchen island so everyone can see it."

"You're welcome!" She looked to Dream, "now open Pap's gift, I helped him pick it out."

It was like *deja vu* looking at the tiny box. By the size of it George already knew what it was but something about it surprised him. Taken back ten or so years he could still see Dream's cheeky smile and Ashlyn's baby babble of going home. He could feel the left over heartbreak mended by the same velvet blue in his hand. Dream flipped the box open for him.

"We thought it would be a good idea to get you a new one," Ashlyn input. "Since I lost yours at the beach when I was four."

She left her Dads to their own devices after that, skipping around the corner to go finish the game she was playing before the birthday celebration.

Dream gently gripped George's wrist, "happy birthday."

He felt teary eyed, "you're still choosing me after all these years?"

Dream kissed his temple and pulled the ring from it's box, "I will always choose you."

The ring fit as perfectly as it did the day he lost it. New with a shiner band and a ring of gold, George admired the gift and what it meant.

"I was heartbroken when she lost it," George muttered. "I didn't tell her but I may have cried about it."

"I know you did," Dream smiled fixing George's hair around his ear. "I would have done this sooner but the timing didn't feel right."

He nodded gripping Dream's hand and leaning in for a kiss, "thank you."

"Of course," he said. Then a sly smirk etched over his features to make George sway on his feet, "I have another present for you later when Karl and Sapnap take Ashlyn to the movies."

He snorted, "do you now?"

"Mm." George kissed the smug look off his face.

"I can't believe Dream's in a Dance recital," Quackity whispered yelled taking a seat next him to in the theater chair. "Does he have a frilly outfit too?"

"I wish," George egged, "but no, just a pink tie to match Ashlyn's costume."

"Aw," his friend groaned, "I need that man in a dress for blackmail."

George snorted, "I have a few incriminating photos if you desperately need them. As long as I get something out of it."

Quackity gripped his wrist and shook it, "yes, let's go. You're still George even after you got married."

"Yes, we've established this." Shaking his head he looked over to the two empty seats on his left side. "Sapnap and Karl?"

"I do believe they are fucking in Karl's car."

A fake surprised gasp, "that's such a surprise."

Quackity bristled as the lights started to turn down low blinking twice to notify the begging of a show. Right as the doors were closing Sapnap and Karl came ushering in disheveled and flushed.

"Real classy," Quackity harped. They sent him bashful looks and took their seat. Karl hugged George around his neck as hello before he sat down. George could only smile.

Sapnap dropped his head onto the chair seemingly tired, George took the opportunity, "Hey Nick, I have a grievance."

Sitting up straight, Sapnap's eyes grew three sizes as he looked at George. He opened his mouth and closed it, "what the fuck did I do for you to call me that?"

"Tell him you love him," George whispered as a baby ballet class entered the stage. "You're just hurting yourself by not doing it."

He scoffed, "no, you can't do that. I'm the match maker not you."

"I'm returning the favor."

He looked away to glance at Karl sighed heavily, "I can't, he'll think it's weird."

George let the subject lie and watched the show. It took a good forty-five minutes before Dream and Ashlyn made an appearance. Ashlyn had several other number George had watched in their living room before seeing them on stage. She looked as beautiful as always, grown up and a little more mature.

When Dream finally graced the stage their dance started out fast, jazzy and quick. George was snorting along with Quackity while Dream tried and failed to complete a simple jazz square. That man may have coordination in video games but dancing was an entirely different subject.

Towards the end the dance slowed and Ashlyn was helping Dream waltz along with all the other dads and daughters. It was sweet and entertaining. George had never felt so warm watching a dance recital. When they came up to bow the first thing Dream did was look for George. Eyes scoring the crowd until they met in the middle and shared a smile. He whispered to Ashlyn who found him just as quick waving a cute hello before tugging Dream off the stage with the rest of the group.

George smiled like an idiot until the end of the show.

As the lights were coming on and their group of friends was not only starving but very rung dry

from sitting in the dark George said hello to familiar parents. Quackity stuck to his side like another child and only smiled when spoken to. Sapnap and Karl still sat in their seats hopelessly whispering to each other.

George felt enough was enough and came up behind them, "we know you guys sneak around with each other. And quite frankly, we are all annoyed. Just tell each other you love the other and put everyone out of their misery."

"George!" They both said mortified. He shrugged and found Ashlyn running to him like a track star. Dream swiped his brows clearly stressed behind her, it was endearing.

"Dad!" She hugged sparkles and hairspray into his button down shirt. Her hair was still perfectly intact and he felt a little smug, as he was the one that did it. "Did you see me wave at you?"

"I did," he chuckled patting her sweaty back. "I also saw Pap mess up that jazz square."

She snorted and pulled back to grin, it looked so much like him with a little hint of Dream's attitude, "at least he didn't step on my toes this time. Oh look, Jasper came. I'm gonna go say hi."

Then she was off running to embrace her best friend like they hadn't just seen each other the weekend before. He rolled his eyes and yelped when tight hands gripped his waist. Dream chuckled in his ear causing the smack of the recital book to his chest.

"Asshole," George sighed fondly. Dream's smile grew wider. "You did great."

He dropped his forehead to George's temple for a moment, pulling back he said, "I was nervous."

Smoothing over the lapels of his suit George said, "you looked great. And there was only one mess up, but Ashlyn had fun that's all that matters."

He received a small kiss, "you're right. Now are we going to eat somewhere because I'm starving."

"George?" Turning at his name he'd never felt his heart sink so fast. "Is that really you?"

It was like a bad dream to see her again. It had been, what, fifteen years give or take? Some house under flashing lights and inebriation, then months later at his door step with pink blankets and a baby carrier. She looked the same maybe a little aged around the eyes. Green as the day he met her and platinum to the root of her shoulder length hair. He felt his breath escape him.

"Stella?"

She laughed like easy rain and George turned from Dream's hold, "wow. Small world isn't it."

"Very," he replied tightly. "What are you doing here? Do you... are you..."

She held her hands up, "whatever you're thinking, no. I'm here because my niece is in the baby ballet class."

When George didn't respond she huffed and looked to Dream, "hi, I'm Stella Frontiersman. I'm... um. Well... I'm."

George finished the sentence for her, voice nearly haunted, "Ashlyn's birth mother."

Recognition snapped quick into Dream's features. He shook her hand, "nice to meet you I'm Clay, George's... husband."

She eyed them, "well, now this is awkward. I'm so sorry to interrupt like this."

Dream laughed like the polite man he was and George stayed stiff. Ashlyn called at them, with a hand on George's lower back he said, "I'm gonna let you talk."

Then he scampered off and swooped Ashlyn from the ground swatting Quackity off who must've made a joke about his pink tie. George cleared his throat and found Stella frowning comically at him.

"What?" He said defensively.

"I'm not here to talk to her," she relented. "You don't have to be so stiff."

He waved a hand at her, "I know."

"Then lighted up," an elbow nudged him. "She never has to know who I am. And if she asks tell her we're old friends from school or something."

George sighed and stuffed his hands in his pockets, "she asked about you recently."

"Oh. And?" Her brow raised and it reminded him of Ashlyn. George guessed the bits of biology would always remain the same.

"And I said if she wanted to we'd look for you." His head tilted softly, "but she said she didn't want to meet, just wanted to know you were real."

Stella nodded, "if she wants to have a talk when she's older I'm okay with it, but I sadly have no desire to be someone in her life. And I feel if I did now it'd make everything really confusing."

"It would."

She hummed and gipped his arm for attention, "I just want to know, is she happy? Loved?"

His nod was definite, "of course. Loved more than she would even know."

"Good," Stella smiled and glanced over discreetly at their love child. "She's beautiful and an amazing dancer."

"Isn't she," George gushed.

"Hmm," Stella raised a brow seemingly remembering something, "fuck you by the way."

"Me!" George sputtered, "what did I do."

"You," she prodded with a smile. "Made me go through the worst pain I've ever experienced in my life!"

"Hey, this was a two way transaction!"

She covered her mouth when she laughed, "you're right. Sorry."

"Geez," he rolled his eyes at her laugh. Ashlyn peeked around Dream's body and raised an expectant brow at him. He could hear her impatience from yards away. "Alright I better go before they get restless."

She gripped his hand softly then released him, "of course. See you around George."

"See you."

Ashlyn welcomed him into their little group from Quackity's back waving at him over the shorter man's shoulder. George let Dream hold him around the waist.

The kiss on his cheek melted him, "all good?"

Staring into familiar eyes he smiled, "all good."

"Can it really be that bad-"

"Shh," Ashlyn told him. Holding Quackity's head to her shoulder, she covered the grown mans ear. "He's going through a lot right now, Dad."

"Yeah, Dad," Quackity sniffled dramatically. "My heart is shattered into pieces."

George scoffed and sank into the warmth of Dream's side. It was movie night... now turned Quackity's need to attention and sympathy. Sappnap was sound asleep on Karl's chest in the corner of the loveseat couch. George and Dream shared the recliner with a blanket and an warm aging patches. Quackity and Ashlyn had a sea of junk food on their couch. Huddled together like they were ready to fight anyone who disturbed their peace.

"I'm not your Dad, Quackity. And besides you went on one date with that girl why are you so..."

"George," he harped. "I'm upset. It was on my birthday!"

Ashlyn patted Quackity's beanie-less head, "there there, uncle Q. You'll get her next time."

Another fruitless sniffle, "you think so, Ashlyn?"

"I know so."

"George, your child is better at comfort than you."

He scoffed while Dream replied not looking up from his phone, "she learned from me. I had to comfort drama queen one and my daughter, drama queen two."

George smiled at him, pressing his nose against Dream's warm cheek, "you love us."

"Always," he muttered softly. Eyes glazed and tender when he looked up. The hand rested on the brunette's hip wrapped a little tighter around his waist when Dream leaned to kiss him. Disgusted groans came from the other couch making the two chuckle.

"Why is love everywhere but with me!" Quackity stuffed popcorn into his mouth.

"There there, uncle Q."

"But Ashlyn! She said I wasn't her type."

"Someone will be your type you can always date a fan," she joked. "You'll know for sure that they like you."

Quackity dramatically pulled from her shoulder and sunk to the floor groaning.

"Dramatic ass." George muttered earnings various agreements from Sapnap and Dream.

"My friend Sara's mom is single," Ashlyn laughed. "You could try that!"

"Ashlyn," George snorted rather than reprimanded.

"No no," Quackity sat up. "I think she's on to something."

George tuned out the two and rested his head beneath Dream's neck. Long lashes fanned closed as the group started a new movie. Something terrifying by the sounds of the opening screams. Dream kissed his forehead and continued to scroll through twitter.

A few hours later Karl was fast asleep in Sapnap's room and Quackity in the guest room. Dream easily carried George up the stairs even though he knew the man was awake.

"You're getting heavier," Dream laughed.

"Maybe you're just old."

Dropped abruptly on the bed George felt his breath beat out of him. A hard scowl was aimed up at Dream who only smiled in response. Leaning forward to kiss his neck George's profane sentence died on his tongue.

"What's this for?" He dug soft fingers in to blond hair and pulled Dream down against him. Loving and melting beneath the other.

"Do I need a reason to kiss you?"

"No," George admitted, "but you usually have something else up your sleeve."

Dream huffed and pulled up to look at him, "I just love you, can that be enough?"

"I don't know, can it?"

"Say you love me."

George caved, "I love you. You know that."

Dream's response was a suggestive kiss, all tongue and heavy breaths. George was willing to be silent to have him that night before a hasty knock cut them off. When the younger man pulled away George dropped his head back aggressively to the bed, defeated.

"Who is it?"

"Pap?" Ashlyn muttered, "Dad? Can I come sleep with you guys?"

George's entire lust-filled state of mind went out the window at the tone of her voice. Sitting up he watched Dream hastily open the bedroom door. Stood there like a young child Ashlyn looked terrified. Her blanket around her shoulder and Roni the bear beneath her arm, George frowned.

"Baby, what happened?" Dream let Ashlyn walk in and closed the door behind her.

"I'm creeped out by that dumb movie."

All of George's worries melted as he pulled Ashlyn into an embrace, "it's not real."

"Yeah, well I'm still freaked out," she huffed and it sounded too much like George, "so can I sleep in here or not?"

George was a breath away from snapping at his kin attitude before Dream's warm laugh filled the room. Sauntering over he tackled the into the sheets and corralled them beneath the duvet.

"We love having you in here with us." Dream pushed Ashlyn's hair out of his face and wrapped an arm around both her and George. "Just like when you were a baby and loved naps."

"I still love naps," Ashlyn sighed.

"So do I," George agreed reaching over for the light. "You're safe with us, Ashlyn."

"Promise?"

"Always." Dream kissed her cheek and settled down. George did the same, agreeing, "always."

"Love you both."

"We love you too."

Chapter End Notes

Aww look how cute! We're officially done with this story. And I know it isn't as good or close to the same vibe as my other stories but it is my whole heart and I love it. So thank you for the ones that stuck around to the end.

Love you guys

Thank you for reading.

End Notes

Thank you for reading!! I love comments and kudos are appreciated!! <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!